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MEANING MAKING AND POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS:
USING THE ARTS, COMMUNITY, REFLECTION, AND SERVICE

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

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ABSRACT

This study explores the essential factors needed in adolescent youth programs, which intend to promote resilience, well being, and meaning making as a part of the healthy development of adolescent girls. The research explores the role of the arts, community building, mentoring, service, and reflection on this development. The context is Side By Side, a summer leadership development program. In a qualitative case study approach, the data is organized primarily from the written and spoken words of seven young women who participated in the program. The final conclusions, following the data analysis, look at the components of meaning making and how these relate to personal transformation.

Though the risks and dysfunctional behaviors of adolescent girls have been the subject of considerable discussion and research, the well being and success of adolescent girls has only more recently been examined. Meaning making itself appears to be crucial to positive youth development and there appear to be a number of replicable factors that support a meaning making environment.

Meaning making is best explored in a safe, caring, but challenging community and it usually involves a sense of purpose and a belief in something larger than us. A sense of belonging to a meaning making community was found to be associated with a wide range of positive outcomes across race, class, and gender. These included an increase in confidence and competence, and a desire to give back to the community. This study found that meaning making is a process through which individuals, in this case young women, can explicitly experience, integrate, and reflect on their life as they make the transition from adolescence to successful, caring adults.

The impact of these findings is discussed and crucial questions for future research are raised.

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Introduction

In my work as a psychotherapist and a program director working with adolescents, I have come to see how essential it is to have meaning in their lives, and indeed in all of our lives. We all know that in our hearts. It is, perhaps, the very essence of our humanity. But what does it mean to make meaning and why is meaning making so crucial to adolescents today, perhaps more than ever before?

Meaning is often defined by using the term itself: meaning is the meaning of life and the meaning of life is to make meaning. It is the *why* to live for, as Nietzsche told us over a hundred years ago, "He who has a why can live through any how." (Frankl, 1962, p.20)

John Gardner, founder of Common Cause, tells us "humans are in their nature seekers of meaning. They cannot help being so any more then they can help breathing or maintaining a certain body temperature. It is the way their central nervous systems work."(Gardner, 1981, p. 100). He goes on to describe this ever-present drive to find meaning.

> We have throughout history shown a compelling need to arrive at conceptions of the universe *in terms of which we could regard our own lives as meaningful.* We want to know where we fit into the scheme of things. We want to understand how the great facts of the objective world relate to us and what they imply for our behavior. We want to know what significance may be found in our own existence, the succeeding generations of our kind and the vivid events of our inner life. We seek some kind of meaningful framework in which to understand the indignities of chance and circumstance and the facet of death.
>
> (Gardner, 1981, p. 102)

I have found that meaning making is a process through which individuals, in this case young women, can be helped to explicitly experience, integrate, and reflect on their life as they make the transition from being adolescents into becoming successful, caring adults. In this process they may master a sense of worth, develop their capacities, and broaden their view of the world. Meaning making affects how these young women construct their conscious lives, care for others, embrace change, and broaden their purpose for living. Meaning making has a way of giving, what Cornell West calls, "audacious hope" (West, 2000) in the face of difficulties and disappointments --- both personal and societal.

"We humans seem unable to survive, and certainly cannot thrive, unless we make meaning. We need to be able to make some sort of sense out of things; we seek pattern, order, coherence, and relation in the disparate elements of our existence." (Parks, 1986, p. *xv)*. It is this ability to thrive by making meaning that is the topic of this work.

Meaning is not something that can be given to someone as a gift or a teaching. We can provide an array of tools, set the scene, plant some seeds, and offer guidance, but each person must build their own framework and construct their own meaning. "One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life" (Frankl, 1962, p.172). This is part of being alive as Joseph Campbell explains.

Joseph Campbell, in a discussion with Bill Moyers, spoke about the need for a core of deep principles.

"You're talking about the search for the meaning of life?" I [Moyers] asked.
"No, no, no," he said. "For the experience of being alive!" (Campbell, 1988, p. 5)

Making meaning is making sense out of life; it is the experience of being fully alive and knowing what you are doing with that life.

Through the process of my work with young people, I find that a common factor in all the adolescent girls I meet seems to be their need to create lives of meaning. This need appears to exist regardless of class, race, or personal differences. The pervasiveness of materialism, cynicism, and skepticism in our society today has left many adolescents without a sense of direction or meaning in their lives, and thus disconnected from themselves and the world (Elkind, 1984; Lerner, 1995; Benson, 1997). Yet we have seen that it is this very connection to meaning that gives lives unity and purpose. Without this connection their crucial, but often unspoken, questions of: "Who am I really?" and "What is my place in the world?" may go unanswered and they will lack an important foundation for the rest of their lives.

Overview

"This is our purpose: to make as meaningful as possible this life that has been bestowed upon us." (Spengler, in www.quotationspage.com, 2002)

On the path towards meaning making, one may find a purpose. Purpose is meaning making in action. It is the setting of goals for one's meaning and finding a reason to work, struggle, and even live.

The purpose of this study is to explore ways of meaning making as a part of the healthy development of adolescent girls. Following the first chapters of theoretical perspectives and reexaminations of exemplar approaches, the research explores the role of the arts, community building, mentoring, service, and reflection on this development and how women can be supported to grow in positive directions. The context is a summer

leadership development program. The data is organized primarily from the written and spoken words of seven young women who participated in the program. The final conclusions, following the data analyses, look at the components of meaning making and how these relate to personal transformation. It is my belief that the narratives of these seven young women may provide useful insights in regard to youth programs and to adolescent meaning making.

My path to meaning making

The actual focus of my research seemed to choose me. For more than six years I have worked with a colleague to create and develop a youth leadership program called Side by Side. I did not know that the program would become part of a new movement in psychology and youth work, known as positive youth development. We began with the idea that young people need to do something that matters, something that stretches and challenges them and allows them to give something back to the world. We believe that young people wanted to make a difference in the world, but could not easily find a way to do that. Each summer I watch the participants become deeply affected by their experience in the program. I have seen them return for visits year after year and talk about the summer they were part of Side by Side. They often used the words, "*It changed me,.*" and *"It was the most important thing I have ever done."*

I wondered what was going on here. Had we stumbled onto something? Could this be a possible path of purpose and meaning making for young people? Exactly what about the program worked? And why did it work or not work? As I completed program evaluations and was asked to consult by schools and out of school programs, I began to

see how important it was that I examine the program's rationale and impact rather than simply trying to convince people of the wonder of this type of program.

Here I was setting off for a Ph.D., yet not exactly sure of my direction. I had a passion for young people. I had some components of a possibly successful program. I had the support of a University and a well-informed committee. What I needed was a research-based understanding of my topic and a language with which to discuss my findings

In 1997 in an attempt to hear the voices of young people directly, I conducted a research project where I taught 20 year olds to interview young teenagers in their neighborhoods. They asked the teens what was important to them. Some of the responses from those interviews included these statements:

> *"The world is based on a whole bunch of shallow idea; kids want something more."*
> *"Eating and sleeping are the only things I enjoy."*
> *"Make sure you know who you are. Always have something in you that says, 'this is who I am,' right? And watch your back."*

After they finished, I interviewed the interviewers and asked them what it was like to go out and ask these questions. The interviewers' responses included these statements:

> *"Our grandparents' generation just wanted a good job, a house and a car. Our parents were the hippie generation and they wanted peace and love. MY generation doesn't know what it wants."*
> *"Every young person thinks about these things, but they never put it in words."*
> *"They don't know how to talk about it."*
> *"We need people like you asking us."*

From this study I concluded that most of our participants wanted four things:

- Someone to listen to them
- A chance to believe they could make a difference, do something significant
- A sense of belonging to something

- A way to make meaning in their lives
  (Nagel, 1997)

In my psychotherapy practice I began to understand that many of the confused or angry teenagers I was seeing and the disenfranchised runaways I worked with on the streets were actually questioning the meaning of their lives. They were not only feeling confused and angry or sad, but powerless and often hopeless. Poised precariously between childhood and adulthood these young people lacked purpose and showed varying signs of sadness and despair, which surfaced as depression or rage.

I began to develop a hypothesis that the cynicism and hopelessness expressed by many young people is actually a call to be proved wrong. Underneath the anger and sarcasm these adolescents want to be optimists. I questioned whether the lack of dialogue and positive interactions was creating a downward spiral of hopelessness. My question became, "What can we do to help adolescents give meaning to their lives and thereby help them to make a healthy transition from adolescence to adulthood?"

This Study

In this study I first present an overview of adolescent girls in the United States today. I approach this view from a developmental and health perspective, examining the challenges to health and their implications for the adolescent population. I then explore well being in relation to individuals and to youth work, presenting a pilot study before proceeding to the actual research of this study.

In Section I, consisting of two chapters, I present a framework for the study. The first chapter asks: What are the forces and challenges currently impacting the development of identity in adolescent girls in the United States? This chapter establishes a developmental context for understanding the experience and needs of adolescent girls

by first looking at the risks and challenges they face. The wide ranges of biological, psychological, and social factors that contribute to girls' identity development are explained in this chapter. Moving away from this somewhat pathological approach into a positive, solution-focused view, I then explore a family systems ecological model as a tool for better understanding adolescents within the family, race, culture, peer group, and society in which they live. This ecosystem approach offers insight into individual identity formation and girls' lives within the framework of their relationships.

The second chapter asks: What does the current literature say about well being, resilience, and protective factors in adolescent girls? It looks at girls' needs from a positive psychology viewpoint focusing on optimal well being and the factors that allow girls to flourish. In this relatively new, rapidly expanding field, I examine the resilience and well being capacities that girls develop and utilize as they grow into womanhood.

Section Two is concerned with the ways Positive Psychology impacts the meaning making potential of youth programs. In this section, chapter three asks: What is Positive Youth Development and how may it be applied to programs for adolescent girls? I first offer an explanation of what is meant by Positive Youth Development programs. I then examine a variety of developmental approaches to meaning making: self-esteem building, social-emotional learning, service learning, citizenship and social responsibility and rites of passage. I look at these approaches as possible applications of the positive youth development approach. Finally, I describe one model of a positive youth development approach, a program called The Power of Hope program.

Chapter Four asks: What are the successful components of a positive development program model as exemplified by the Side By Side Program? I present a pilot study of

Side By Side, a youth leadership program, in which I examine the six components of the program and their effect on the participants. In this pilot study I use personal observation and the participants' written and spoken words.

Section Three, The Study, consists of three chapters. Chapter five discusses the research and the methodology of the study. The study takes an in-depth look at the participation of the seven girls in Side by Side during the summer of 2001. I use their interviews and journal entries as well as an additional six-month follow-up interview as data for this qualitative case study.

In order to find out what was successful in the program I chose to take a qualitative approach in the form of case studies. I used qualitative research as a way "to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne, 1999, p.6)

In chapter six, I create a case study narrative of each girl using her own words to form the portrait. Because I believe deeply in a youth-centered approach, I wanted the girls' own voices to speak for themselves. Since, in most ways, youth construct their own culture, I utilized this approach in order to directly access their beliefs and assumptions. Chapter seven is a data analysis of the themes of commonalities and differences that emerged from the data and an examination of the implications of these findings.

In the fourth, and final, section, chapter eight is about making meaning. This chapter looks at meaning making and transformation in adolescent girls and suggests the significance of meaning making to both adolescents in general and to youth programs. In chapter nine I propose some conclusions and offer some recommendations for concerned adults, youth programs, and finally for youth.

Chapter One

What are the forces and challenges currently impacting the development of identity in adolescent girls in the United States?

> In the waning years of the twentieth century, doing what is right for our children and doing what is necessary to save our national economic skin have converged.
>
> (Edelman, 1987, p. 93)

Marion Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund, reminds us that if we do not address our youth today and respond to their needs there will be no healthy generation tomorrow. To that end I offer this chapter as evidence that we must, as a nation, increase our awareness of the problems and needs facing our adolescent girls, and even more importantly, that we must increase the awareness of the tremendous potential and possibilities that exist within them.

The adolescent years are formative and significant. In order to understand the experience and needs of adolescent girls we will look at them from a developmental context. Multiple levels of development mark the entry into adolescence. These changes are distinguished by physical changes connected with puberty, cognitive and socioemotional development changes, beliefs about the self, and a restructuring of social roles and relationships with parents and peers (Van Hasselt, 1995).

There is a wide range of possible outcomes created by these interacting biological, psychological and sociological factors. Throughout this concentrated

development adolescent girls are forming identities, figuring out who they are, and how they fit into the world.

It is clear that this development may exert tremendous influence on the path of an individual's life. These rapid and dramatic multiple changes can prove overwhelming to some adolescents. By age 15, substantial numbers of American youth are at risk of reaching adulthood unable to meet adequately the requirements of the workplace, the commitments of relationships in families and with friends, and the responsibilities of participation in a democratic society.

> These youth are among the 7 million young people - one in four adolescents – who are extremely vulnerable to multiple high-risk behaviors and school failure. Another 7 million may be at moderate risk, but remain a cause for serious concern.
>
> (Carnegie Council, 1995, p 28)

Adolescence is a time of fateful choices; choices that can lead towards a positive, rewarding life or choices that can lead toward alienation and hopelessness. These choices are influenced by one's skin color, household income, family, neighborhood, and health and also sometimes by chance. In our society's attention on adolescents over the past 25 years the general tendency has been to approach teens as a problem. This has served to fragment the complex individuals that they are, the community of youth that exists among them, and the system of services, which are offered to them (Burt, 1998). The statistics and studies in this paper may give the impression that the majority of youth are in trouble. This is not true. Most young people get through adolescence without major problems (Dryfoos, 1998). Yet many indicators show that there is an increasing number of adolescents at risk of being unprepared and unsuccessful. Adolescents today face

greater risks to their current and future health than ever before (Takanishi, 1993b). It is my hope that by understanding the risks and the needs of adolescent girls we will be better able to provide them with solutions and programs to meet their needs, encourage their growth, and allow them to embrace a healthy adulthood filled with meaning.

There are researchers who consider the lack of faith and values to be the root cause of girls' problems. There are some who believe that the problems and challenges facing teens today are no worse than they were 50 years ago (Scales, 1991). Some place the burden on inadequate parenting (Egendorf, 1999), others on failing school systems (Gatto, 1992). However, there are a growing number of researchers who see specific and unique challenges that adolescent girls (and boys) face today (Lerner, 1995; Takanishi, 1993a).

Some of these concerns apply to teenagers, both boys and girls, and some are gender specific. Violence, for instance, is more prevalent in males who comprise the majority of perpetrators. However, the impact on girls of exposure to violence needs to be more clearly understood. In the following work I will focus specifically on challenges in relation to adolescent girls. I choose to focus on them not because I believe they are at greater risk, but because they are the population I know best and the focus of research and inquiry has only recently turned to them and still has a long way to go (Phillips, 1998).

It is difficult to summarize the multidisciplinary literature on girls' developmental challenges. There is not one broad conceptual framework able to incorporate the various approaches to the complexity of adolescent girls. I will look at the forces and challenges facing adolescent girls in the U.S. as they develop individual identities. Under this

domain I will examine the health challenges of adolescent girls: emotional and mental health, body image, sexual health, pregnancy and motherhood, substance abuse and violence. I will then ascertain the developmental challenges they experience in relation to the world: through the media and the economy, in their family, school, religion, and community. Finally, I will attempt to show that a family systems-ecological (ecosystems) approach (Daw, 2001), also called developmental contextualism, (Lerner, 1995) offers a theoretical framework for understanding and action. This approach addresses individual girls from a developmental, contextual framework, and shows an ability to understand them within the family, race, culture, and society in which they live.

Ecosystems theory offers insight into individual identity as well as insight into girls' lives in relationship. It is a theoretical method without blame that uses a positive, solution-focused approach rather than a pathological one. I believe an ecosystems theory will later be valuable in looking at treatment and prevention, program development, and research. It is my hope that it will, as well, make room to include girls as partners in research and program development.

The population of adolescent girls in the United States

The US Bureau of Census gives the current number of adolescents (ages 10-15) as 20 million. The number rises to 31 million if we use the ages 10-18 (Takanishi, 1993b). 49% of adolescents are female. During the 1980's the adolescent population was reduced from 35 million to 33 and 3/4 million with an expected increase by the year 2000 to 38.5. Though the overall number of adolescents has grown, their proportion of the population has been cut in half in the past 100 years. Teenagers account for about 10% of the US

population (Takanishi, 1993b). The percentage of Hispanics in the US was 26% in 1989 and is expected to increase to 33% in 2000 and to 45% by 2080.

The US is undergoing great changes in the racial composition of this adolescent population. By the year 2000, more than 1/3 of the adolescents in the United States will belong to a racial or ethnic minority (Feldman & Elliott, 1990). They can no longer be called "minorities" (McWhirter, 1998) and we can no longer condone studies or programs that do not take into account cultural, racial, and class differences.

The adolescent experience in the United States is now longer than ever. In the beginning of adolescence children experience a biological change and at the end there is a psychosocial change. We now know that brain development is not complete until the early to mid-twenties (Geed: NIH). This transition into adult life can easily be a decade long (Hamburg, 1992). These changes raise unique challenges and opportunities.

Considerations of Culture, Race and Ethnicity

In addition to all the challenges faced by adolescents today, minority adolescents face additional issues. By the adolescent years, minority youth are well aware of the values and expectations of the majority culture. They experience these in different ways at home, work, school, and every place they go from the bus stop to the movie theater. Issues of racism, discrimination, inequality, and poverty affect program development as well as research with this population (Spencer et al, 1990).

In our multi-cultural society where there are various ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and economic backgrounds it becomes essential for researchers, teachers, therapists, and consultants to develop a working knowledge of the influence of culture on

behaviors and beliefs. Out of an understanding of our differences a common understanding, tolerance, and even joy can arise.

To understand cultural and racial differences we must begin with a look at the issue of power. Freire calls those without power the oppressed. He speaks of our education system as an instrument of oppression and silence and suggests that people be invited to the "practice of freedom" (Freire, 1970). Lisa Delpit defines the culture of power in the classroom. She describes the classroom as having its own codes that are created by the ones in power. Knowing the rules can help the oppressed. And those who have the power are often unaware, explicitly of the dynamic of this power (Delpit, 1995). When trapped in an oppressive classroom, refusing to learn may be the only option. This choice allows the oppressed student to function, albeit on the margins (Kohl, 1994). Adolescents are often referred to as a population with no power or voice against whom many accusations are leveled (Males, 1996). Girls face additional issues of gender discrimination.

There are similar issues for all adolescents but there are also significant cultural differences. For example, in the American Association of University Women report in 1992, black girls showed the lowest drop in self-esteem as they entered high school while Hispanic girls showed the biggest drop (Vasquez & Fuentes, 1999). Many minority girls grow up within two worlds: the old world culture at home and the one out in the larger world. Although this may cause conflict, it can also provide strength to resist the negative gender messages form the dominant culture (Leadbeater, 1996, Schwartz, 1998).

Until very recently there has been scant research about minority adolescents (Leadbeater, 1996). The studies that do exist often confuse race with socioeconomic

status (Zaslow, 1993). The studies of minority youth usually focus on problems and look at one single minority population or the difference between one minority group and the majority youth (Spencer, 1990). Recent studies show how societal pressures affect the natural internal process of developing an identity in multiracial youth (Schwartz, 1998).

In this paper the categories of risks are not examined separately for different races and ethnicity. However, differences and separate statistics are cited when applicable. There are significant variations in several areas. As a white woman working with mixed racial groups of adolescents, and as a researcher, I must remain vigilant to my own cultural bias. It becomes an on-going process and learning experience. Awareness of these racial and ethnic differences is crucial and more research is needed concerning these differences. We must strive to ensure that all adolescent girls are accounted for, so that policies and programs will evolve that take into account the range of needs and abilities of adolescents.

The Development of Individual Identity for Adolescent Girls

Young adolescents are moving into puberty; their bodies, their emotions, and even their cognitive abilities are changing. They are tackling issues such as independence from and dependence on parents, peer influence, and dealing with an unknown future. The decisions they make during these years in regard to education, sex, drugs, behaviors, and work, can have long-ranging impact on their lives (Leadbeater, 1996).

There is now considerable literature to support the establishment of a sense of identity as a major developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1982). This gradual emergence of identity in adolescence is the basis of

Erikson's psychosocial theory, a comprehensive stage theory of personality development across the life span. In this he presented eight sequential stages of development, each with a developmental task to negotiate. In his theory, development of a firm sense of identity in adolescence (Stage 5) is a prerequisite to the development of the capacity for intimacy, the next developmental milestone (Stage 6). Erikson considered adolescence to be the best life stage for identity formation because adolescents are not constrained by the expectations and commitments of the adult world (Erikson, 1968).

Identity development, considered the pivotal task of the adolescent years, involves a developmental process that requires integration, differentiation, and an expanding cognitive capability leading to increasing self-mastery (Leadbeater, 1996). Erikson included biology, individual psychology, and social surroundings as contributors to identity development (Kroger, 1989). We will see that this development occurs within a social context wherein the individual is influenced by family, peers, community, and culture. Erikson defined three elements necessary for identity development: a sense of inner integrity or sameness; a sense of inner sameness which is continuous yesterday, today, and tomorrow; an integrity which is experienced within a community of significant others (Erikson, 1968). Marcia expanded upon this by describing four identity statuses to show the ways of experiencing the world. These are: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement (Marcia, 1980). The moratorium period is a time of experimentation, especially crucial during adolescence (Ianni, 1989). As we will see, however, adolescent girls often experience increasing pressures (personally and culturally) that limit their ability to explore and to feel powerful (Gilligan, 1991; Pipher, 1994).

If one moves along the stages from unexamined identity to searching for identity, to identity achievement one's self-concept, meaning, and self-confidence will increase (Phinney, 1993). Out of that, intimacy can develop. According to Erikson, intimacy is defined as a "fusing of identities" (Erikson, 1968, p. 135). By this, Erikson means that a person who has not first resolved their own identity issues, will be unable to form intimate relationships.

The adolescent identity time is also a time for the renegotiation of the parent-child relationship where the relationship is changed but not abandoned (Burt et al., 1998). This can be difficult, as most parents of teens know. I see many clients who seek therapy due to the strains on the parental relationship.

Many researchers now believe that identity formation is a developmental blend of discovering internal truths and creating or constructing an identity – both discovery and creation (Ianni, 1989). This belief is consistent with what we have learned about young women's ways of knowing.

Questions now arise as to whether it is right to apply these theories to women or whether the traditional theories of identity development are biased towards western, white males (Patterson et al., 1992). Feminist research has criticized definitions of identity, such as Erikson's, that emphasizes individualism, and, in their focus on the self, make clear distinctions between the individual and the "other" or the relationship (Chodorow, 1978; Heilman, 1998).

In general, for males, identity formation precedes the stage of intimacy; while for females, intimacy is dealt with before identity (Gilligan, 1982; Kroger, 1989; Jordan, 1991). Intimacy and identity may merge and overlap for women rather than be

experienced as a series of steps. It has been suggested that interpersonal relatedness may actually be the central identity construct for women (Patterson et al, 1992; Gilligan, 1982).

Studies of female development consistently find that women develop a connected sense of self and define themselves through attachments to others. Thus, defining development as evolving a separate and distinct sense of self may leave out the female experience in which women discover themselves through connections with others.

Chodorow (1978) claimed that boys have to discriminate between themselves and their mothers—usually the primary caregivers, making separateness an important aspect of male development. Girls have to define themselves in relationship to the caregiver. Often mother-daughter conflict is the result. The purpose of the daughter's struggle is not to achieve separateness but to maintain connection while evolving a unique self.

Gilligan (1982) found that females respond to moral dilemmas in a connected way that emphasizes responsibility and care for others, unlike Kolberg's (1969) more separate and masculine model that emphasizes internalized principles and a concern for justice. Kohlberg proposed a hierarchical sequence of developmental stages based on questions of justice and fairness, to show the basis of moral decision-making. Gilligan proposed a three level system that looked at moral decisions by issues of care. Though recent research has not shown any difference in moral reasoning by gender, these two models have contributed to our understanding of identity development (Kroger, 1989).

Maturity can be defined as being able to integrate the self and other, that is, being able to listen to others while still hearing one's own voice. It is an ability to attend to

another person and feel related to that person in spite of enormous differences. Identity formation then involves balancing various commitments and goals to oneself and others (Belenky et al., 1986). This is not something that can be achieved by the individual in isolation.

Postmodern theories of identity reject the concept of a stable self, and this seems particularly relevant for adolescent girls. For postmodern theorists, the self is understood as something fluid and changing, depending on the changing circumstances or discourse mode. Adolescence as a stage also needs to be understood as fluid and changing, resulting from particular historically specific social practices in law, education, medicine, and the family (Heilman, 1998). High school students use language, dress, and symbols to display their identity. Young women must learn which act to perform and in which settings. As adolescents, they struggle to decode the meanings of other people's acts and to create their own meaning in order to function as responsible citizens, persons in relationships, members of groups, and even as available commodities. In many contexts, young women have good reason to be concerned about the identities and sources of power contemporary society offers them (Rogers, 1993; Gilligan, 1991; Heilman, 1998).

Many girls I see in psychotherapy feel a profound sense of isolation that deeply affects their positive development. If women tend to grow through connection and value relationship (Gilligan, 1982; Plaskow, et al., 1989; Jordan, 1991) it follows that they find satisfaction, pleasure, effectiveness. and a sense of worth if they experience their life activities as arising from, and leading back into, a sense of connection with others (Josselson, 1987; Miller, 1976). Since our society values individualism as healthy and normal, the female need for relationship is often ignored or devalued. Many women say

that they experienced adolescence as a time of loss: loss of confidence, loss of direction, even loss of actual self (Hancock, 1989).

> Adolescence poses problems of connection for girls coming of age in Western culture, and girls are tempted or encouraged to solve these problems by excluding themselves or excluding others. Yet the problem girls face in adolescence is also a problem in the world at this time: the need to find ways of making connections in the face of difference.
>
> (Gilligan, 1991, p. 24)

In order to evolve a comprehensive understanding of adolescent girls, I will first examine the aspects of individual identity and then explore how those aspects become part of a larger system of identity in relation to others. After looking at the impact of ethnic identity development, I will describe some of the problems and challenges faced by adolescent girls as they attempt to develop an individual identity. I will examine the impact of emotional and mental health, body image, sexual health, pregnancy and motherhood, substance abuse, and violence.

The Development of Ethnic Individual Identity

For minority youth there exists an added dimension of identity caused by the differences of their ethnic culture with that of the mainstream. In order to construct a strong self-identity they must be able to incorporate a positively valued ethnic identity (Phinney, 1993). Girls of color are not free to simply pursue autonomy and independence. There is some additional strength they gain from these restraints (Leadbeater, 1996).

Many adolescents have not explored the meaning of their ethnicity. Moreover, if these young people have internalized negative societal stereotypes of their ethnic group, they are likely to experience lower self-esteem and self confidence, and they may have difficulty finding meaning in their lives. In an effort to understand themselves better, some teens may have come to question the meaning of their ethnic group membership (Nieto, 1996).

Phinney has proposed that the formation of ethnic identity includes three stages. Young people who had not examined their ethnic identity are referred to as unexamined. Adolescents in the second stage are called searchers. For them, a turning point (or crisis) usually marks the beginning of a process of exploration. Individuals who complete the search are said to be identity-achieved because they have reached a state of clarity and understanding about the meaning of their ethnicity. This status is characterized by "acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity" (Phinney, 1993, p. 7).

Those adolescents who have explored ethnicity as a factor in their lives and are clear about the meaning of their ethnicity are likely to show better overall adjustment than those who have not considered their ethnicity or are unclear about it (Nieto, 1996; Tolman, 1996; Phinney, 1993).

Physical and Psychological Challenges Facing Adolescent Girls

As girls explore their identity, they face many challenges to their well being. Everyone has her own individual mix of strengths and vulnerabilities. Before we can understand the strengths to be discussed in the chapter two, we will first explore the

vulnerabilities. Psychologist George Albee believed that psychopathology is caused by physical factors plus stress plus exploitation (Scales, 1991). The challenges to adolescent girls also involve a combination of these three factors: physical, stress, and exploitation.

I will look at some of the prevailing challenges as they affect adolescent girls. This list is neither definitive nor complete and there are many overlaps and intersections within the categories. In many cases there is no definitive answer as to whether the problem is physical or psychological and many of them are not only issues of individual identity but also involve relationships. I have divided the health risks into separate categories for clarity. These divisions are psychological/mental health, body image, sexual health, pregnancy and teen motherhood, substance abuse, violence, and trauma.

1. Psychological Health

The National Center for Education in Maternal and Child health says that the major cause of disability among adolescents is mental disorders (Takanishi, 1993b). The Office of Technology Assessment found that one out of five of the nation's 31 million adolescents (ages 10 – 18) have at least one serious health problem and many more require health services. This corresponds to the number of adolescents who have been found to have diagnosable mental disorders. Up to 40% of all adolescents report being sad, exhausted, hopeless, or in other emotional distress (Kazdin, 1993). Depression is frequently related to other problems such as low self-esteem, eating disorders, and increased substance abuse (Commonwealth Fund, 1997). The American Association of University Women's 1992 report confirms what therapists, educators, and parents have been seeing in their offices, classrooms, and living rooms: adolescence, for girls, often

marks a loss of confidence and an increase of self-criticism and self-doubt (Ornstein, 1994).

- Suicide

Suicide rates and accidental death rates for adolescents are increasing in relation to the rest of the population. Suicide is higher among the white populations. Girls report more than double the rate of attempted suicide than boys, though boys are 7 to 10 times more likely to die (Phillips, 1998). There is a belief that many so-called accidents (especially car) are actually suicide. 40 to 60% of adolescents experience some form of suicide ideation (Lennings, 1994). Hopelessness may be a better indicator of suicide than depression (Peterson, et al, 1993).

- Depression

Girls suffer more depression than boys and the numbers of depressed girls appear to be growing. Dramatic increases in depression occur between the ages of 13-15, peak at 17-18 and decline subsequently to fit with adult norms (Peterson et al., 1993). Girls are twice as likely as boys to be depressed (Phillips, 1998).

These rates demonstrate that teenage girls are often faced with difficult emotional times during the years between 13 and 18. Rates of depression have increased dramatically since WWII and impact adolescent girls the most (Peterson et al., 1993). Depression and suicide are often linked with conduct disorders. Thus, increased psychological problems can result.

Depression often goes unnoticed in adolescent girls or is dismissed as moodiness or sensitivity, and only 44 percent of girls with symptoms of depression report getting care.

Depression and suicide are often linked with conduct disorders, resulting in increased psychological problems (Commonwealth Fund, 1997).

- Anxiety and self-mutilation

We are seeing significant increases in anxiety self-mutilation among teenage girls. Girls who appear normal, slice and scar their own arms and legs (Miller, 1994; Egan, 1997). Some doctors believe self-injury is epidemic with the numbers estimated at 2 million, but may be higher. It generally starts at age 14 and continues into the late 20's. The average practitioner is white and often suffering from other disorders such as alcoholism or bulimia (Egan, 1997). Cutting involves and perpetuates a cycle of shame and self-blame. Yet most girls speak of a sense of release, control and even bliss, which can become addictive. Self mutilation, school phobia, and anxiety disorders ranging from mild to severe are found in girls in our cities, as well as small mid-western towns, and rural farmlands, and across class, race, and culture (Van Hasselt, 1995; Pipher, 1994).

- Eating Disorders

Eating disorders typically begin during adolescence though they are creeping down to younger ages. These can be extreme dieting, bulimia, or anorexia nervosa (Van Hasselt, 1995). 90% of eating disorders are found in females (Phillips, 1998; National Institute of Mental Health, 1993). Although eating disorders are identified as psychological dysfunction, I will examine issues of body image as a separate category because it affects all teenage girls.

2. Body Image

Body image involves how a girl perceives the size and shape of her body, what she thinks about her body, and the behaviors related to her body image such as bingeing and purging, excessive exercise, and dieting (Slade, 1994). Conservative estimates suggest that 1 out of 100 females is anorexic, and 3 out of 100 are bulimic (National Institute of Mental Health, 1993). The problem is more acute among adolescents and young adults. Body image disturbance is not limited to those diagnosed with eating disorders. A continuum of attitudes and behaviors exists. Some are mild, whereas others can be life threatening (Heilman, 1998; Hesse-Biber, 1996).

American Association of University Woman found that a girl's body image is often crucial to her sense of self (Ornstein, 1994). The body has become the central personal project of American girls (Brumberg, 1997). The American physical ideal is narrowly defined and carries a moral judgment: thin is good. This ideal affects not only beauty but also health (Hesse-Biber, 1996).

> In Western society women are consistently and obsessively concerned not with the process of becoming more physically adept or expressive of the needs of their own particular bodies, but instead with the body and the self as products and conveyers of information to the observer. Since the body is never a finished product, but only as good as it is at the moment, only a work in progress, women must be eternally vigilant about appearance. More often than not, women become the enemies of their bodies in a struggle to mold them as society wishes.
>
> (Kaschak, 1992, p.193)

Since the 1960's, the ideal body has become slimmer while the average woman has become heavier. The idolized woman has achieved new levels of skeletal emaciation.

Take a look in Vogue Magazine or at Ally McBeal, a popular TV sitcom character. The women are so thin as to look weak and sickly. We regularly see models that are waif-like and possibly anorexic. Women on TV are wearing tighter clothes and shorter skirts on thinner bodies. The Rhodes Farm Clinic in London revealed that two modeling agencies approached one of its most seriously ill patients with job offers, a girl of 5'7" weighing 98 pounds (Leland, 1996). Yet the average American woman wears a size 12 to 14 and weighs 144 pounds. The images that constantly accost women make the comparison to one's own body less and less satisfying. Women just don't measure up. Hesse-Biber speaks of the cult of thinness as she describes the intense, daily preparation that the pursuit of "ideal" body image demands (Hesse-Biber, 1996).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's "1995 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance" survey of high school students found that 60% of girls were trying to lose weight (Phillips, 1998) and that the age of dieters has become younger. White girls develop anorexia most often, followed by Hispanic girls, while black girls have a better body image. (National Institute of Mental Health, 1993). In 1998, I asked a focus group of teenage girls if they knew any girls that were satisfied with their body. The answer was a resounding, "no".

" We are awash in depictions of teenage girls as passive victims – of abuse, of the over sexualized media, of predatory boys, and of girlhood as damage and degradation" (Leland, 1996. p. 66).

Some researchers have explored bio-chemical links to eating disorders; some examine the genetic connection, while others the personality differences. These medical or psychiatric approaches, though they have a place, obscure the role of cultural

influences (National Council for Research on Women, 1998, Steiner-Adair, 1990). Eating disorders do not occur in non-western cultures.

How much is body image shaped by capitalism? After all, beauty and diet are major industries generating enormous profits (Brumberg, 1997; Hess-Biber, 1996). They have considerable stake in keeping us dieting and dissatisfied. More than 65 million Americans are dieting and they spend more than $30 billion annually on diets and assorted paraphernalia (Hesse-Biber, 1996).

Most of these dieters are women and increasing numbers of them are young. The age of female dieters keeps going down. A 1986 study of middle-income families revealed 81% of ten-year-old girls reported that they were on a diet (Hesse-Biber, 1996). In order to attempt to meet the culturally ordered guidelines of weight, girls become engaged in constant awareness of food, calorie intake, chronic dieting, bingeing and purging, and the use of laxatives and diuretics. Extreme exercise is also used. Though these seem like examples of eating disorders, they often lack the psychological components. Hesse-Biber labels this culturally induced eating. "It is normative behavior for women who are part of the cult of thinness" (Hesse-Biber, 1996, p. 82). It is also seen as one cause of self-injury and mutilation (Egan, 1997). At the same time, our country is facing obesity and early onset Type 2 diabetes at rapidly increasing rates.

The beauty myth has cultural variations. Black women often have a more positive relationship to their bodies and are less concerned about thinness than white women. They seek less professional help for eating disorders. For Puerto Ricans, at least until recently, plumpness was a sign of health, prosperity, and sexiness. Our monoculture is changing all this. Women of color face much bigger issues than thinness in the beauty

race. If the ideal of American beauty is thin, it is also white, blonde, and bouncy haired (Vasquez et al., 1999; Hesse-Biber, 1996). This is the "beauty" ideal that they are confronted with every day in magazines, movies, billboards, and TV. "The specifics of appearance may change, but the fact that women's worth is equated with appearance in the eyes of determinate and indeterminate men is constant" (Kaschak, 1992, p.201).

3. Sexual Health

Though sexual health affects girls individually, we can't talk about it without including relationship. For women in general, and especially adolescent girls, sexuality is intricately intertwined with the issues of relationship.

Girls represent an oppressed segment of our society and their power is often determined by how they look and how they please, rather than how they act and what they achieve (Brumberg, 1997; Laidlaw et al., 1990; Kaschak, 1992). It becomes unacceptable and even dangerous for them to speak their mind in a "girl-poisoning culture" (Pipher, 1994). This highly sexual, pervasive, media-saturated environment offers girls minimal protection and does little to ease them gently into adult issues. Girls are maturing earlier today. The average age of first menarche is 12.3 years, well below averages reported twenty years ago (Van Hasselt, 1995). It is not rare for eleven-year-old fifth graders to be menstruating and for thirteen-year-olds to be sexually active. We flood children with sexual images in movies, on TV, in song lyrics, on the news, and even in education, and then act surprised when our daughters casually engage in sexual activities before they are old enough to drive (Schultze, 1991). In the 1960s, 10% of teenage girls were sexually active as opposed to more than 70% today (Brumberg,

1997). Among ninth grade girls, 32% of females have already had intercourse. One measure of risk for sexually transmitted disease is the number of partners one has. Almost 18% of teens reported four or more, with African American males reporting highest at 52% (Dryfoos, 1998). The most common reason girls give for engaging in sexual intercourse is peer pressure from both boys and girls. By age 18, 60% of black girls and more than 50% of white girls have had sexual intercourse (Phillips, 1998). I have had a number of teenage clients who inform me of their multiple partners at age 14, 15, and 16.

Teenagers are highly susceptible to the sexual content of television. The message they are getting there is that sex is romantic and exciting, that premarital sex is accepted, and at the same time, that good girls say no (Strasburger, 1995). They see almost nothing about contraception or pregnancy, abstaining or delaying, let alone the troubling realities of sexual encounters. Since teenagers rank the media as just behind peers as a source of information, these shows can exert a significant impact (Strasburger, 1995).

Young adolescents' thoughts and emotions cannot always keep pace with their early physical maturation. The time lag between the body's growth and the development of emotional and cognitive maturity creates an abyss rife with danger. The precipitous arrival of maturity has dangerous effects. It denies teens a protected period of time for the important task of constructing a personal identity, a sense of self, and it subjects adolescents to greater stress (Elkind, 1984).

Among sexually active girls 15 to 19 in 1982, over half did not use contraception when they first had intercourse (Hamburg, 1992). Adolescent girls in the United States have higher rates of pregnancy than girls in other western countries. From 1973 to 1987

the pregnancy rate for 10 to 14 year olds increased 23% (Takanishi, 1993b). In 1986 there were about a million pregnancies among girls under 20; about half resulted in births and most were unintended. This rate of teen pregnancy has dropped in the most recent years, though the incidence of pregnancies in those under 15 years of age has increased (Hamburg, 1992).

Sexually active adolescents have much higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than older groups. STDs have increased in recent years among youth. One-fourth of all adolescents will be infected with an STD before they graduate from high school (McWhirter, 1998). Because teenage girls are less biologically mature and have developed fewer antibodies they are especially susceptible to STDs and the associated risks of becoming infertile (Myers, 2000).

HIV is spreading among adolescents. The numbers reported increased 43% from 1988 to 1989 and another 57% in 1991. Though the number of infected boys outnumbers girls, they are at a ratio of 5:1, whereas, the adult population male to female ratio for HIV is 12:1. Adolescent girls and adult women are the fastest growing group of new HIV infections worldwide (Center for Disease Control, 1995). The majority of infected girls are African American and Hispanic (Scales, 1991).

In a 1995 survey, 54% of sexually active high school girls reported using a condom. This is up from 46% in 1991 but still leaves almost half of sexually active girls having unprotected sex (Center for Disease Control, 2003). Once, when I asked a young client I was seeing if she was practicing safe sex, she replied, "I didn't know him well enough." Alcohol increases the risk of unprotected sex, and cultural and peer pressures also have an influence on sexual practice.

Girls' understanding of their sexuality is shaped not only by gender and family, but also by cultural norms and societal values. For the past 20 years, data showed an increase in the number of high school girls having intercourse. This number has recently dropped from 55% in 1990 to 50 % in 1995 (Phillips, 1998). The term "sexually active" leaves out data on lesbian experiences or self-experiences and the recent increase in oral sex, which is often not counted as "real sex". "If a girl goes out and has sex with a guy, then she's a whore, but sleeping around turns boys into players. For a girl to be accepted, she has to 'be down and dirty', be like a man, basically (Sales, 1997). Girls have told me that they are either considered a slut or a prude; there is nothing in-between (Nagel, 1997). Many recent researchers are approaching sexuality as fluid and multidimensional (Tolman, 1996: Phillips, 1998). They have found that girls' sexuality and desire is complex and is a complex issue that requires more focused study.

4. Pregnancy and Motherhood

Every year, one in ten teenage females become pregnant. This is more than 3000 a day. 86`% of these pregnancies are unintended. Half of all teenage pregnancies end in birth, 14% end in miscarriage, and 35% end in abortion. The good news is that the number of unintended pregnancies has declined in the 1990's. Teen pregnancy and birth rates have shown slow but steady declines since 1992, but the US teen birth rate remains two to seven times greater than most comparable industrialized nations (Henshaw, 2001).

Among high school girls who become pregnant, 62% drop out of school. This number is higher for Hispanics-74%, and lower for blacks- 54%. Despite the

concern over out-of-wedlock births, pregnant girls who get married are more likely to drop out of school, live in poverty, and have a second baby within two years (Fine, 1991).

Children born to teenage mothers have lower cognitive scores, greater school difficulty, and more health problems (Phillips, 1998). Most teenage mothers are unmarried and receive no financial support from the father. 75% of single female-headed families are in poverty at least some of the time. This contributes to the fact that one in three children under the age of six live in poverty (Egendorf, 1999).

Some researchers report that the majority of teenaged girls' babies are fathered by adult-aged men (Egendorf, 1999). Fathers of children born to 15 to 17 year-old girls were on the average four years older than their partners.

Perhaps it is more important to understand the causes of teen pregnancy rather than the numbers. Four factors that contribute to teen pregnancy include; early school failure, early behavior problems, poverty, and family dysfunction (Egendorf, 1999).

5. Substance Abuse

Experimenting with drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol during adolescence is nothing new. There are numerous sources of research, which generally agree on the extent of substance use and abuse in teenagers. The National Institute on Drug Policy showed that 92% of the high school class of 1987 had used alcohol, and 50% had used marijuana. 60 to 75% of adolescents first try alcohol or cigarettes before 16, and 25% of them exhibit problems with those substances by the time they are in high school (Scales, 1991). Hispanic students, males and females, and white males have the highest rate of heavy drinking, with African Americans rating considerably lower (Dryfoos, 1998). Binge

drinking has come to our attention in the recent years after a number of tragic deaths. According to the National Adolescent Health survey, 26% of 8th graders reported having had five or more drinks at least one time in the past two weeks. 92% of high school seniors report experience with alcohol and one-third report daily use. In addition, one-third are binge drinkers, which is defined as having five or more drinks in a row (Lerner, 1995).

Alcohol related arrests on college campuses surged 24 % in 1998, the largest jump in seven years. Alcohol abuse is usually cited as the number one problem on every college campus, and alcohol often plays a role in other crimes, particularly sex offenses (McWhirter, 1998).

A survey of rural African Americans in grades 7-12 reported that ages 10 to 13 are the normal age for initial use of alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, and other drugs. 44% of 8th and 9th graders in rural Illinois had ridden in a car recently where the driver had been drinking (Scales, 1991). One quarter of students reported the use of marijuana in the past month, with highest use among African American males (Dryfoos, 1998).

Tobacco use is as likely for girls as for boys and is on the increase among adolescents. Nearly all smokers first use cigarettes in high school. According to a 1995 survey, 34% of all high school girls in the nation smoked. These facts have long-term health implications for girls (Center for Disease Control, 2003).

6. Violence and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The United States is the most violent country in the industrialized world (Osofsky, 1997). Homicide is the second leading cause of death among all 15 to 24 year

olds, and the third leading cause of death among 5 to 14 year olds. 67.8 out of a thousand 16 to 19 year olds were victims of robbery, rape, or assault in the early 1980's. This rate is more likely for males and for African Americans (Hamburg, 1992). A poll by Louis Harris and Associates, found that one in eight youth said they carried a weapon for protection. In 1995, 1.5 million people were incarcerated, and 100,000 youths were in juvenile detention centers. Yet, with growing numbers of people in jail, our crime rate continues to increase (Osofsky, 1997).

> There is overwhelming evidence that many of the adolescents and young adults who first become delinquent and later develop into criminals were exposed earlier in their lives to much violence, disorganized families, poor education, and limited opportunities.
>
> (Osofsky, 1997, p.5)

From 1985 to 1994, the total number of violent crimes committed by 10 to 17 year olds rose from 75,000 to over 125,000 and the weapon crime violations for that age group doubled (Egendorf, 1999). Likewise, almost half of all males and a third of all females in that age group reported being in a fight during the previous year. In 1991, 130,000 10 to 17 year olds were arrested for rape, robbery, homicide or aggravated assault. This is an increase of 48% since 1986, only 5 years earlier (Lerner, 1995).

It is more difficult to measure the effect on youth of exposure to violence. It is known that, in certain inner city neighborhoods, young people are exposed to the sight of frequent violence or threat of violence. Numerous studies have shown that as many as 60% have witnessed a shooting and/or stabbing (Osofsky, 1997). What is the effect of living with the threat of violence?

The National Research Council in 1992 reported that patterns of aggression are so well established by the age of eight, that unless there is intervention, that same pattern will be there at 38. One study revealed that 43% of elementary students report the fear of being kidnapped (Garabino, 1999).

Family abuse and sexual abuse are specific forms of violence. Children of single parents are 80% more at risk for abuse or neglect. The likelihood of sexual abuse from a stepfather or a mother's live-in boyfriend is greater than for girls who live in a two-parent home (Myers, 2000).

Young people in the juvenile system, foster care, and homeless shelters all report high levels of abuse. Many teen mothers report being the victims of rape and incest when they were younger (Dryfoos, 1998).

Sexual violence is overwhelmingly more common towards women. Between 25 to 33% of girls are sexually victimized by the time they are 18. 25% of women will be raped. 84% of them will know their attacker. A large, but unknown, number of American women are battered in their own homes by husbands or lovers (Kashak, 1992). Approximately 85% of working women are sexually harassed at their jobs. Even the catcalls women are subjected to as they walk on the street can create a sense of fear and intrusion. All women are vulnerable to sexual assault or rape. Though few victims report it, we know that the incidence of dating violence and date rape is considerable (Laidlaw et al., 1990). Sexual control becomes rape and violence at its worse and remains an all too frequent part of our culture (Lefkowitz, 1997).

These facts have huge implications for the well being of adolescent girls. In addition to the immediate medical and emotional health problems, girls who reported

sexual or physical abuse were more than twice as likely as non-abused girls to smoke, drink, use drugs, or struggle with eating disorders (Commonwealth Fund, 1997).

The United States is a leader in violence in the western industrialized nations and it does not take much violence to set a tone of threat. This threat can lead to a low expectation of life, both the quality and the length (Garbarino, 1995; Herman, 1992). Shots fired a few times a month and a handful of killings yearly create an atmosphere of fear. Living in a state of extended fear can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD (Osofsky, 1997, Herman, 1992).

Assaults and threats of violence and their ongoing possibility in girls' lives are capable of causing traumatic stress. Therefore, an examination of the current Post Traumatic Stress literature might assist our understanding of treatment options for adolescent girls. Although not the only ones to become victims, females, and adolescent girls in particular, have been vulnerable to traumatic stress throughout history (Waites, 1993).

We have seen that growing up in America today is an experience that can compromise the confidence and wholeness of girls. It is a time that can be filled with fear and stress. It can, in fact, leave girls traumatized (Pipher, 1994). Maturation does not feel normal, safe, or trustworthy. Disempowerment, sexual demands, separation from family, loss of freedom, introjected shame, and seemingly impossible cultural demands create a traumatic environment. Every time these young women open a magazine, turn on the television or walk into school they are confronted with their shortcomings. This constant onslaught forces many girls to become withdrawn, fearful, or angry as the confident assumptions of childhood are threatened (Gilligan, 1991; Brumberg, 1997; Barras, 2000).

Psychiatrist Judith Herman speaks of trauma as the "affliction of the powerless," an overwhelming coercion that leaves the victim helpless. She no longer feels she has control or meaning in her life (Herman, 1992). Adolescent girls often feel this sense of powerlessness and lack of control. Traumatic experience can create a need to escape what is, in essence, inescapable. This could be repeated abuse at the hands of an adult caretaker or simply the change from a relatively carefree childhood to a constricted, vulnerable adolescence.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a persistent, deep-seated, negative emotional response to an incident that continues to cause high levels of stress and anxiety. Traumatic experiences destroy the foundations of our beliefs about safety and our assumptions of trust (Herman 1992). It involves normal responses to abnormal events. The normal challenges of adolescence today can become traumatic for some girls. Perhaps the reactions of these teenage girls who are angry or depressed are normal reactions to a world that is out of balance.

The Development of Identity in Relationship

Recent researchers' works have offered a voice-centered, connected, or relational approach to women's development (Gilligan, 1982, Belenky et al., 1986, Jordan et al., 1991). This is an alternative to the earlier models of identity development where the self is an autonomous, self-sufficient entity. In the traditional sense of self as defined by psychologists Erik Erikson, Barry Levinson, and Lawrence Kohlberg, growth towards greater independence and separation is expected. These models have been developed by and tested on educated middle-class white males and have often viewed women from a

deficiency model. Connected Knowing or Relational Development is a way to understand and value a woman's way of knowing and being (Belenky, 1986; Gilligan, 1991; Jordan, 1991). Relationship is crucial to a girl's development. The ability to be in relationship rests on the development of an aptitude for empathy (Surrey, 1991). The concept of relational psychology emphasizes the growth of empathy capacity as primary in women's development (Jordan, 1991). A woman's self concept and ways of knowing are intertwined (Josselson, 1987; Belenky, 1986). This is significant. If the world that matters, i.e. the white patriarchal world, does not value the way women learn, women will internalize this as a reflection of their stupidity and lack of competence. When women's voices are heard as part of the study of human development and learning styles, women's lives, values, and strengths begin to be seen. These qualities are then reflected in the world as a whole and are also seen and valued in men.

This new theory challenges the traditional identity theory of separation and individuation that it is normal, healthy, and appropriate for children to separate from their parents and communities as evidence of their maturity. If that were true, it would follow that women who do not separate are flawed, or less than whole. I suggest that this is a view of adolescence and one that may no longer be correct or beneficial to promote. It may be time to explain healthy identity development is an interweaving of separation and connections.

We have been witnessing a paradigm shift, wherein we view the inter-connectedness of the observer and the observed. There are signs of this shift in physics, immunology, research education, and psychology. For the first time, we are seeing a psychology develop that includes the woman's perspective and experience. The concept

of relational psychology emphasizes the growth of this capacity as primary in women's development (Jordan, 1991; Miller, 1997).

Relationship is crucial for the development of identity in adolescent girls. Identity formation for women is not a matter of whether or not they define themselves in the context of relationships but how relationships are used in that process (Belenky, et al, 1986). Some confuse attachment and sameness, using relationships for security. Others take more risks and use relationships for self-validation and support. Some develop awareness of themselves in the context of others; while others never seem able to. Because they experience their identity in relation to others, choosing to whom one is anchored is an important mechanism of identity development for women. Relationships do matter.

Though relationships are very important in the identity constructs of girls and women, this focus exists in addition to, rather than in place of, a focus on the external world. Looking at the need for relationships and the need for socioeconomic status, we see that young women, compared to young men, tend to develop healthy divided selves rather than Erikson's "sameness" (Heilman, 1998).

There is still much we do not know about female development. It is important that we do not take the new findings as fact. Women do not always respond to others in caring ways and many males develop relationally. Few studies have included the plurality of female voices or taken into account how gender norms may differ according to race or class (Leadbeater, 1996). We still know little about many of these emerging issues of care and relationship, or assumptions about the influence of race, class, and religion on them. We must guard against the tendency to generalize about men and women without having

considered the effects of individual situations and temperament, along with ethnicity, on behavior (Schwartz, 1998).

We know that normal development is complex. It is important to study not only how people learn to define themselves as separate selves but also how we learn to define ourselves in connection with others. Traditional theories of human development have been based on a "separate" model where maturity is equated with increasing autonomy and rational, self-directed behavior (Gilligan, 1991; Belenky, 1986). When judged according to this model, women often appear not to have developed a strong sense of self, while persons with highly developed reason have been considered more mature than those with highly developed emotions. It is my hope that we strive for a more comprehensive theory that takes into account how the capacity for connecting with others contributes to the healthy development of self and how girls' well being is intertwined with this process.

Further approaches to identity in relationship are just beginning to be studied. In the following section we will look at the effects of relationship with family, school, religion, community, and the media have on the development of adolescent girls. This list is by no means definitive or complete. We must also look at other relationships such as to one's peers, and to one's nation and world.

1. Economic factors

Poverty is the most accurate indicator of risk in adolescents. One in five children live in poverty and one in three experience times of poverty (Myers, 2000). Keep in

mind that this is in the richest nation in the world. Many people are coming to believe that children live in a socially toxic environment,

> One that is detrimental to their development. [The pollutants] are easy enough to identify: violence, poverty and other economic pressures on parents and their children, disruption of relationships, despair, depression, paranoia, alienation --- all the things that demoralize families and communities.
>
> (Garbarino, 1995, p. 4-5)

Poverty exerts a direct impact on family stress, and school failure, and it thereby leads to a host of other problems. Unemployed parents are more likely to be depressed, alcoholic, and abusive. They have less time, less sense of power, and experience greater levels of stress (McWhirter, 1998; Scales, 1997). Adolescents are affected by many recent changes in economic and political trends, such as:

- There is an increase incidence of job loss and stagnation among the working poor, especially among ethnic minority families. This trend contributes to a growing impoverishment of youth. The income gap in NYC is worse than that in Guatemala. Because education and income are closely related, the parent's illiteracy often creates a life of poverty for their family, and the cycle of poverty will likely repeat in their children's lives and in the lives of their children's children. (United Way, 1996).
- . Homelessness, though frequently connected to income, has its own devastating developmental impact on children and teens (MacWhirter, 1998). Families with children make up the largest growing subgroup among the homeless population. According to the 1986 U.S. Conference of Mayors, families comprised 28 percent of all homeless people in America's 25 largest cities (Katz, 1989). It is

estimated that 1.5 million youth, ages 11 to 18, are homeless in the US. Homeless youth include those whose families lack shelter (homeless), those who leave home on their own (runaways), and those thrown out of their home (throwaways). The rate of psychiatric disorders among homeless youth is estimated to be 3 times greater than that of their sheltered peers (Kazdin, 1993).

- The lack of available health care diminishes the physical and general well being of today's youth. Health care in the United States is very expensive. For all but the richest, health insurance is essential. Yet one out of seven adolescents is without health care, and the 21 million adolescents with private insurance face limited access to mental health services, substance abuse treatment, contraception, and pregnancy, dental and eye care (Takanishi, 1993a).

Almost nine million teenagers are growing up in families with incomes below the poverty line. One third of them have no health care. One in three of all African-American and Hispanic teenagers come from impoverished homes (Dryfoos, 1998). 55% of all teenagers who have children live in poverty in the first year after the baby is born, 77% within five years. The profile of a young person likely to become a teen parent is typically someone who has lived in poverty, has had only one parent (usually her mother) as the head of the household, has a limited education (high school diploma or less), and limited, if any, work experience. All these conditions make it likely that she and her young children will also live in poverty (United Way, 1996).

> Children have become the most impoverished age group in America. Since 1974, their situation has worsened at an alarming rate. Among all children, 27 percent lived below the poverty line in 1960; 15 percent in 1974; and 21 percent in 1986. This is an increase of 40 percent in just twelve years. More than four of every ten black children live in

> poverty, as do 38 percent of Hispanic children. Within central cities the situation is worse.
> Much of children's poverty derives from the increase in female-headed households. In central cities in 1986, 44 percent of poor persons, 37 percent of whites and 52 percent of blacks, lived in female-headed households. Within them, 60 percent of all children under 18 were poor.
> (Katz, 1989, p.126-7).

We invest 11 times more federal benefit dollars per person in those over 65 than we do in those under 18, despite the fact that the young are our future and there are four times more children in poverty than seniors (Males, 1996; Myers, 2000).

As we examine these statistics about poverty, we must begin to look at social science and public policy with a focus on unemployment, structural dislocation, and political power more than on the behaviors and deficits of the poor (Katz, 1989). Especially with teenagers, we must be cautioned not to blame the victim. Poverty also builds feelings of degradation and deprivation in teens and increases their eagerness to escape the home (Males, 1996; Scales, 1997).

Though we have less sympathy and hear less about them, there are also risks for high-income adolescents. These include distracted, self-involved professional parents, too much money and expensive toys, designer drugs and other aspects of excessive materialism (Gabarino, 1995).

Unsupervised latch key kids are a growing population in families at all income levels. This is a symptom of the fact that at least half of all children in the United States will live in a single parent home at some time in their lives; and more than 60% of all mothers work outside the home. Young adolescents who are unsupervised for more than 20 hours a week are at double the risk of alcohol and drug abuse (Hamburg, 1992).

2. The family

Even our supposedly "ideal" families often experience isolation. Fewer families live near relatives and most people do not even know their neighbors. People move more often (Hamburg, 1995). Both parents are often working. Quality childcare is difficult to find and expensive. Time pressures are intense as more and more Americans are working longer hours and yet making less money (Scales, 1991; William T. Grant, 1998).

The divorce rate has quadrupled in the past 20 years. Most American children today will spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family. By the age of 16, half the children of married parents will see them divorce. Most of the children will remain with the mother. Remarriage, with all its complex relationships and unique challenges, needs further research (Hamburg, 1995). I have personally seen many young girls in my office who are dealing with resentment due to the disruption caused by mom's changing boyfriends. The majority of single-parent families are still African-American but the numbers of white and Hispanic single-parent families is on the rise. 24% of children and adolescents are being raised in a mother-only family (Myers, 2000).

Divorce and non-marital fathering impede father care (Myers, 2000). In 1995, nearly 25 million children were living in homes without their biological fathers. About 40% of those children had not seen their fathers in at least a year. A study of 22,000 children, ages 12 to 17, found that adolescent girls in mother-only families were nearly twice as likely to use illegal drugs or alcohol as girls living with their biological parents (Barras, 2000).

Today, over one million teenagers run away or are thrown out of their homes every year and many of them end up on the streets, exploited by adults (United Way, 1996). Many of the runaways are escaping abusive homes. 30% are running from involvement in the child welfare system (Nelson, 1995). These runaways have high rates of depression and conduct disorders. 85% of them are sexually active and 85% use illegal drugs. Most of these runaways have dropped out of school and 20% have been involved in prostitution. The high rates of drug use combined with sexual activity puts them at greater risk of HIV and AIDS (Nelson, 1995).

The National High School and Beyond survey of adolescent women conducted by MORE, found that for both white and African-American girls, the most significant factor in their avoidance of teen pregnancy is the extent to which they believe a parent cares about them (Scales, 1991). Numerous sources now agree that the factor that continually emerges as critical to at-risk youth, (some say for all youth), is the regular presence of a caring adult in their life (Benson, 1997; Daloz, 1986; Dryfoos, 1998).

Children whose families are failing to function well are at greater risk from outside factors such as drugs and alcohol. One example of this is that children growing up with domestic violence are most susceptible to the detrimental effects of growing up amidst neighborhood violence. They are more likely to be in gangs, use violence and get arrested (Haggerty, 1994). We see that children growing up in violence are more susceptible to violence. Children growing up in intact families are more likely, than those from single parent and step-parent families, to attend school regularly, earn good grades, and stay in school (Scales, 1991).

3. The school

Socioeconomic status is still the best predictor of educational outcomes (Basow & Rubin, 1999). In the richest communities, such as Winnetaka, IL and Scarsdale, NY, schools spend more than $8,000 on each student. In the poorest communities, such as Tallulah, LA and Eagle Pass, TX, schools spend just over $3,000 per pupil (Kantrowitz, 1997).

The College Entrance Examination Board attributes dropping SAT scores to changed schooling, changed families and increased television viewing's replacement of reading (Myers, 2000). Girls' scores still lag behind boys' in math (Phillips, 1998).

School failure is used as a major indication of "at risk" status. The main cause of dropping out is being behind in school and 20% of 8th graders have been held back (Dryfoos, 1998). During the 1980's, school drop out rates increased for African Americans in the inner cities to between 40% and 50%. High school drop out rates are 300 times higher among poor than among non-poor students. Girls are less likely to drop out than boys, except for Hispanics, and the rates vary considerably across ethnic groups. Once out of school, girls are less likely to earn a GED (Phillips, 1998).

In 1986, 57% of 10 to 15 year old African Americans were two or more grade levels behind their peers. There is a clear relation between falling behind in grade level and dropping out. 92% of girls cited being kept back a grade as the reason they dropped out, as compared to 22% of boys (Fine, 1991). Once having dropped out, girls are more likely to give birth and to live in poverty (Phillips, 1998). Unemployment rates of high school dropouts are more than double those of high school graduates. Each year of

secondary school education decreases the chances of welfare dependency by 35% (Lerner, 1995).

The 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study, conducted by The National Assessment of Educational Progress, looked at 25,000 8th graders. It used six indicators of risk including: single parent, low parental income, and education. A little more than half had no risk factors, but 47% of African Americans and 37% of Latinos had more than two risk factors. Students with two or more risk factors were two to four times more likely to have low-test scores, poor grades, high absenteeism, and to believe that they would not graduate (Scales, 1997). 13-year-old African American and Latino students are an average of four years behind white students. There is extensive data that shows the importance of expectations. African-American, Latino, and Native American youth believe that their teachers expect little of them. Even when the teachers themselves were African American, this was often still true (Dryfoos, 1998).

It has been suggested that the combination of puberty-related development and the changing of schools from junior high to high school is the cause of school failure and the drop in self-esteem. These students are faced with a larger school, less meaningful classroom participation, and a decrease in strong, personal relationships with teachers just when they are most in need of recognition, strong interactions, and close relationships. In addition, junior high brings an increase in separation by ability, just when peers are becoming important (Dryfoos, 1998; Eccles et al, 1993).

In looking at the risks connected with schooling, we have to make sure we do not overlook those young people called "The Forgotten Half". These are the 20 million youth (16 to 23 year olds) who are not college-bound. Their opportunities for a job with a

future have shrunk dramatically in the last 20 years. Our economy has shifted from industrial-based factory jobs with high wages, benefits and usually lifetime job security to service sector jobs that are minimum wage with no benefits and no security. Unskilled, uneducated workers aged 20 to 24 suffer extremely high levels of unemployment. The jobs available are minimum wage jobs with little chance for advancement, security or good benefits. At a time when we repeatedly hear about the great economy, these forgotten young adults' real income has declined precipitously (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). In my interactions with this population, I see a strong underlying dead-end hopelessness.

What is the role of our schools in this? Can they do more to prepare young people for the world of work?

> We have defined the primary purpose of schooling as entry into college. ... Non-college bound {students} now fall between the cracks when they are in school, drop out, or graduate inadequately prepared for the requirements of society and the workplace.
>
> (William T. Grant Foundation, 1998, p.37)

This is one of the many problems the schools must attempt to address. The renowned educator Herbert Kohl states,

> The freedom to make a life for oneself based on fulfilling work that one freely chooses is, for me, an essential aspect of life in a democracy, and if so-called real-world education denies this freedom, then it must be opposed as dangerous for children."
>
> (Kohl, 1994, p. 66)

There are some distinct differences between the academic achievement of girls and boys. Girls tend to get better grades than boys in elementary school. They surpass boys in verbal subjects and show an equal ability in math. As girls enter their adolescent

years, their grades fall, most noticeably in math and science (Henderson, 1990). In the last five years this number has increased, bringing girls' math scores almost even with boys' again (Phillips, 1998).

4. Religion

In many ways, America is a highly religious country. In recent Gallup research they found that belief in God ranges from 94% to 96%. There are an estimated half million churches, synagogues, and mosques, and at least 2000 different denominations. People who attend religious service at least once a week are more than twice as likely as others to volunteer for community service. Black and Latino are among the most devout and more than three-quarters of them (compared to 55-60% of whites) say that religion is very important to them (Cnann, 2001). It might, therefore, be expected that religious faith and institutions would play a significant role in the journey of adolescent girls to adulthood. They are, after all, searching for meaning and connections and religion often offers both of these. Religion with its goal of providing a sense of meaning, may give strength in the face of stressful life events and provide a buffer against depression by fostering a sense of optimism, reducing fatalism, and by altering perceptions of suffering. Religion may thus provide the individual with resources for explaining or even resolving problems and challenges. Fowler calls this stage of adolescence, Sage 3 or Synthetic-Conversional faith when a person's attention extends beyond the family into school, peers, perhaps work, and religion. At this stage faith serves as a basis for identity, a way to organize values, and for the formation of a personal myth (Fowler, 1981).

Many adolescent girls are active in their churches and are influenced by the church's teachings. They do participate in religious institutions and find support in faith more than adolescent boys (DeZolt & Henning-Stout, 1999).

Religiosity has been variously defined in terms of church attendance, as the degree to which a person says they care about religion, or as agreement or disagreement with statements about religious ideals. Religiosity has been found to be a good predictor of a number of important life outcomes for adolescents. Higher levels of religiosity have been shown to positively correlate with ego strength (e.g., hope, will, purpose, love), health status, and prosocial peers and behavior. It has been negatively correlated with depression, premature sexual involvement, and suicide ideation and attempts. Research also shows that an inverse relationship exists between religiosity and alcohol use.

Religious involvement can have different meanings and consequences for adolescents from differing racial backgrounds, and considerable research suggests that religiosity is higher among blacks than whites. Compared with white adolescents, black adolescents rated religion as more important, prayed more often, attended religious services more frequently and were more fundamentalist in their religious beliefs. A number of scholars have addressed this difference and reasons it may be so pronounced, and most have pointed to cultural explanations. The church is often the hub of existence in the black community, as well as a holistic ministry and a social center (Brown, et al, 2001, p. 696-705).

As might be expected, active faith is highest among youths whose families have a worship pattern that involves the youth. Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Bandura 1986) suggests that youth learn through modeling behaviors. During family worship,

parents may model prayer and witnessing, and through storytelling or narratives of their own religious experience symbolically model behavior consistent with their religious belief (Lee et al., 1996).

Lowered concern for material things and lowered alcohol and drug use occurred in two of the three groups with frequent worship in which youth were actively involved. Active faith, including reported helping of others, was higher in all three of the groups in which youth frequently read, prayed, and talked about God during family worship. Yet frequent worship, by itself, is not associated with higher levels of faith. In fact, patterns of frequent family worship without active youth involvement were associated with the lowest Active Faith scores. Also, frequent family worship in which everyone participated in all worship activities every time was associated with higher materialism, legalism, and, when it did occur, drug or alcohol use (Lee, et al., 1996)

Recently the Bush administration, in conjunction with a number of foundations and not-for profits, has been examining Faith-based Initiatives. There is a growing belief that in the nations' poorest big-city neighborhoods religious congregations, traditional churches, para-church groups, and faith based non profit organizations are the backbone of civil society. Through food pantries, soup kitchens, after school programs, and other forms of giving, the primary beneficiaries of these programs are the children and the teenagers. Therefore there is a strong movement to bring public funding back to institutions of faith. This is a controversial move because of the perceived threat to the constitutional directive of separation of church and state (Cnaan, 2000).

5. The community

As a society, we have placed massive pressures on our girls while simultaneously shaping in them a greater vulnerability (Blumberg, 1997; Rogers, 1992; Laidlaw, 1990). We tell them to be independent, but to have a man; to be strong, but be unrealistically thin; to be smart, but not obnoxious; to be assertive but not yell or get in trouble; to be caring and sexual, but not a slut or a woman with desires. These pressures create a more pervasive, less specific oppression for girls today, which comes disguised as an increase of freedom and independence. At the same time, girls are unprotected by being less supervised, less admired and respected, and surrounded by less visible moral imperatives. They are often given fewer rules, minimal adult interactions or guides, and more free time. As autonomy increases, parents abdicate responsibility, communities turn a blind eye, and mentors are conspicuously absent.

In the past, there was a neighborhood and a community watching. Where I grew up in upstate New York in the late 1950's, our neighbors would report to my mother that I had been seen riding my bike through a red light or that my brother had swiped a candy bar from Woolworth's. This is what is meant by the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Community brings connection, responsibility, citizenship and a sense of being known.

"The need for community is universal. A sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values that make our lives meaningful and significant – these needs are shared by all of " (Sergiovanni, 1993, p xiii).

Today the increase in individualism threatens to overwhelm the survival of community and many teenagers feel the repercussions (Bellah, 1985; Myers, 2000).

These existing trends increase the impact of the American psychological and cultural dictum that it is normal, healthy, and appropriate for children to separate from their parents and communities as evidence of their maturity. This increases the sense of isolation, while sacrificing community, which may prove detrimental to future generations.

How to form caring, significant attachments with adults is a challenge we are facing with youth (Scales, 1991). Carnegie Corporation President, David Hamburg, believes that adolescents need to find a place in a valued group, to engage in valuable tasks with that group, and to form valuable, close relationships with others (Hamburg, 1992). These needs all refer to the importance of community.

The church used to be a place around which community developed. But youth involvement in church activities dropped in the past decade (Scales, 1991). However, there are some indications of a resurgence in the importance of the church in our young people's lives, especially in the black churches.

Neighborhoods are often dramatically segregated and sometimes hate-based. The opportunities to build what Putnam calls "social capital" are becoming rare. Research shows that early adolescents cognitive ability to sense group and community needs increases at the same time that their stated concern with these needs decreases (Scales, 1991). Adolescence is the time when they need a strong connection in dome form to the community.

The media

TV is a dominant cultural force in our country and serves as the primary commonality among Americans (Garbarino, 1995). Television viewing has become a major part of modern youth lifestyle. Children aged 6 to 11 watch more than 23 hours of television per week and youth 12 to 17 watch more than 21 hours per week (Strasberger, 1995). Teenagers spend as much as 35 to 55 hours per week in front of a monitor when you add in computer games, video games and movies. Children spend more time watching television than they spend in any activity other than sleep (Schultze, 1991). Over the course of a year, most children and adolescents spend more time watching television than they spend in school (Strasburger, 1995). Television, therefore, provides a major source of information for young people about the world that they live in. Young people obtain much information, accurate as well as inaccurate, about how people behave, and how they look, from television.

Research studies have identified that the frequent watching of television is a risk factor in a number of disorders (Page, 1996; Tucker, 1987). For example, eating disorders, obesity, and high levels of physical inactivity among children and adolescents have been linked with the frequent viewing of television (Strasberger, 1995; Tucker, 1987). Tucker found a significant positive correlation between hours of television viewing and alcohol consumption in adolescent males. Teenagers, who viewed television infrequently, have also been found in one study, to be more emotionally stable and use drugs, particularly alcohol, less frequently than heavy television viewers (Page, 1996; Tucker, 1987). Children from poor families, with poor academic abilities, or with

parents who watch a lot of television tend to view significantly more hours of television per day (Schultze, 1991).

"Media is one component of a potentially toxic environment for youth" (Osofsky, 1997, p 76). The American Psychological Association concluded that the average American child had witnessed 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence by the time they graduated from elementary school (Osofsky, 1997). The ongoing National Television Violence Study found the following: 1) the majority of television programs contain some violence; 2) perpetrators go unpunished in 73% of all violent scenes, and violence is rewarded almost as often as it is punished; 3) 47% of all violent interactions show no harm to the victims, and only 16% of programs depict long-term negative consequences of violent behavior; 4) 25% of violent interactions on television involve the use of a handgun; and 5) only 4% of all programs espouse an antiviolence theme (Osofsky, 1997).

Though the entertainment industry continues to deny it, numerous studies link media violence to an increase in antisocial and aggressive behavior, a desensitization of viewers to violence, and an increase in the perception that we are living in an exceedingly dangerous world (Osofsky, 1997; Strasburger, 1995; Singer, 1998). Children who maintain a heavy diet of television violence become insensitive to violence they observe in the real world, and are less likely to take action when they see another person being victimized through violent means (Strasburger, 1995; Singer, 1998).

Television is a powerful medium and young people are often more receptive than adults to its ability to transmit information and shape social attitudes. It can influence perceptions of the "real world" and social behavior, mold cultural norms, and convey

strong messages (Strasburger, 1995). Until the end of the 1950's, youth still cited home, peers and local organizations such as schools, churches, and clubs as the authority in their lives. In recent years, traditional authority figures have been replaced by the electronic media (Lodziak, 1986).

Television appears to be a major cause of physical inactivity in young people as well as adults. Insufficient physical activity can contribute to overweight and obesity. Too much television can also replace time that might have been devoted to reading, problem solving, homework, hobbies, and social interactions. Heavy television viewers were found to be more shy and lonely than light and moderate television viewers (Page, 1996).

TV can also exacerbate an adolescent girl's split from her voice and her inner knowing, thereby rendering her more easily influenced by outside pressures (Rogers, 1993; Brumberg, 1997; Hesse-Biber, 1996). A 1988 study which looked at adolescents on TV, found that: 1) teenage girls' looks are portrayed as more important than their minds; 2) intelligent girls are often depicted as social misfits; 3) girls are depicted as passive; 4) girls are depicted as obsessed with shopping, beauty and dating, and are almost completely middle class or wealthy (Strasburger, 1995).

The impact of media depictions on body image disturbance has been consistently shown to form an unrealistically thin ideal (Fine, 1995; Slade, 1994). Adolescents are believed to be particularly vulnerable to the thin-promoting messages (Botta, 1999). Some researchers have claimed that media pressure to be thin is the strongest influence on body image.

> Adolescent girls look toward people they see on television to define what their own bodies should look like. They see these perfect images as representing realistic goals to achieve. The more they compare themselves, the more they strive to be thin, the more they dislike their bodies, and the more they engage in unhealthy behaviors. Most do not truly engage in any sort of critical viewing. Instead, when they question what they see, it usually serves to make them feel worse.
>
> (Botta, 1999, p.35)

As we "know" our stars more personally and with greater emotional involvement than we know our neighbors, our local neighborhoods and communities break down. Electronic media blocks the formation of community ties and leaves behind an empty loneliness as isolation increases (Lodziak, 1986). Today's teenagers often find more intimacy on-line than in person.

Modern marketing makes a point of telling youth what they want and creating new needs that they are not yet aware of. They tell us that consumption is a cure for unhappiness, sadness, and boredom (Shultze, 19919). People are encouraged to find fleeting comfort in our constant purchases, driven by the idea that the next acquisition is sure to be the solution to our unhappiness (Bellah, 1985; Shultze, 1991; Garbarino, 1995). This does not help to create a culture of well being for young girls. These issues concern Marion Wright Edelman, the president of The Children's Defense League,

> I think our kids are growing up today in an ethically polluted nation where instant sex without responsibility, instant gratification without effort, instant solutions without sacrifice, getting rather than giving and hoarding rather than sharing are the too frequent signals of our mass media, business and political life. The standard for success for too many Americans has become personal greed rather than the common good.
>
> (Edelman, 1993, p. 12)

Developmental Ecosystems: A Context for Understanding Adolescent Girls.

I intend to move away from a pathological single-issue remediation approach to the problems facing girls, towards a preventative, integrated perspective, which will be developed further in the chapters that follow. We are only beginning to understand whether programs and actions that enhance leadership, self-esteem and social competency skills affect the capacity of adolescents to avoid engagement in unhealthy behavior (Takanishi, 1993a). If we are to approach all girls as whole human beings, "as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be managed" (DeAngelis, 2001 p.61), we must make available a perspective that embraces the integrative, holistic aspects of adolescent development. This model would have to look at the multiplicity of ways that girls are impacted in their lives. One way of understanding this approach is by using a developmental ecosystems approach. This involves the overlapping theories of Urie Bronfenbrenner and Murray Bowen and is drawn from Boehm's theory of physics, Chaos Theory. Researchers and practitioners are now recognizing that not only are family members, schools, and communities influenced by adolescents, but that they in turn influence the development and well being of the youth (Dryfoos,1998). There is still very little information available about how behavior is organized and structured by the interdependence of the diverse parts of the adolescent's social world.

> What has been lost in the controversy between developmental and social models is an understanding of the continuing interplay between individual minds and life situations and the collective forces of all of the community's agents of socialization. Lost with it --- is the fact that socialization does not take place in some abstract "society"; it results from children's life experiences as they grow up in the smaller contexts of communities and their

families, peer groups, schools, and other social institutions.
(Ianni, 1989, p. 14)

1. Family Systems Theory explained

Family systems theory is a framework used to conceptualize and work with complexity and interacting parts. All systems are organized and strive to maintain some form of balance or equilibrium. We can integrate the female adolescent experience within family system theory, because it places individual development in the context of a biologically rooted interdependence that is influenced by other people in the family. The components of the system are the personal subsystem consisting of biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components; the interpersonal subsystem consisting of attitudes and skills; the family subsystem and rules specific to the family; and the exterior systems consisting of friends, school, and community organizations.

Activities in one subsystem will always affect at least one other subsystem. There are a number of aspects of this theory that are significant to our topic:

- All elements in a system affect each other.
- The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
- It attempts to move beyond cause-and-effect thinking to a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple factors, which interact across time to produce problems or symptoms.
- It recognizes an interplay between biological, genetic, psychological, and sociological factors in determining individual behavior.
- It is concerned with current interactions and patterns of communication and behavior (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

2. Social Ecology

In Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of social ecology, individuals are viewed as nested within interconnected systems (i.e., individual, family, extra familial) that influence behavior in a reciprocal fashion. He saw individuals as embedded within and influenced by a series of settings. The micro (individual), self and family, is embedded within the exosystem (interpersonal). The school and community in which the family lives, is contained within the macrosystem (sociocultural), the culture and institutions. This approach assumes that individual behavior can only be understood by taking into account factors at each of these levels - the individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural. Thus, development is defined as a lasting change in the way a person perceives and deals with her environment. It involves "the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9).

In using this approach with adolescent girls, emphasis is placed on the interaction between the environment and the adolescent. Therefore, aberrant behavior is viewed as discordance between the child and the ecological system. An assumption of the ecological approach in this case, is that the environment must lack the features necessary to support that individual's optimal performance. The behavior is viewed as the girl's effort to restore equilibrium to the intolerable situation. In this perspective the context of the behavior becomes very important (Eccles, 1993; Gabarino, 1995).

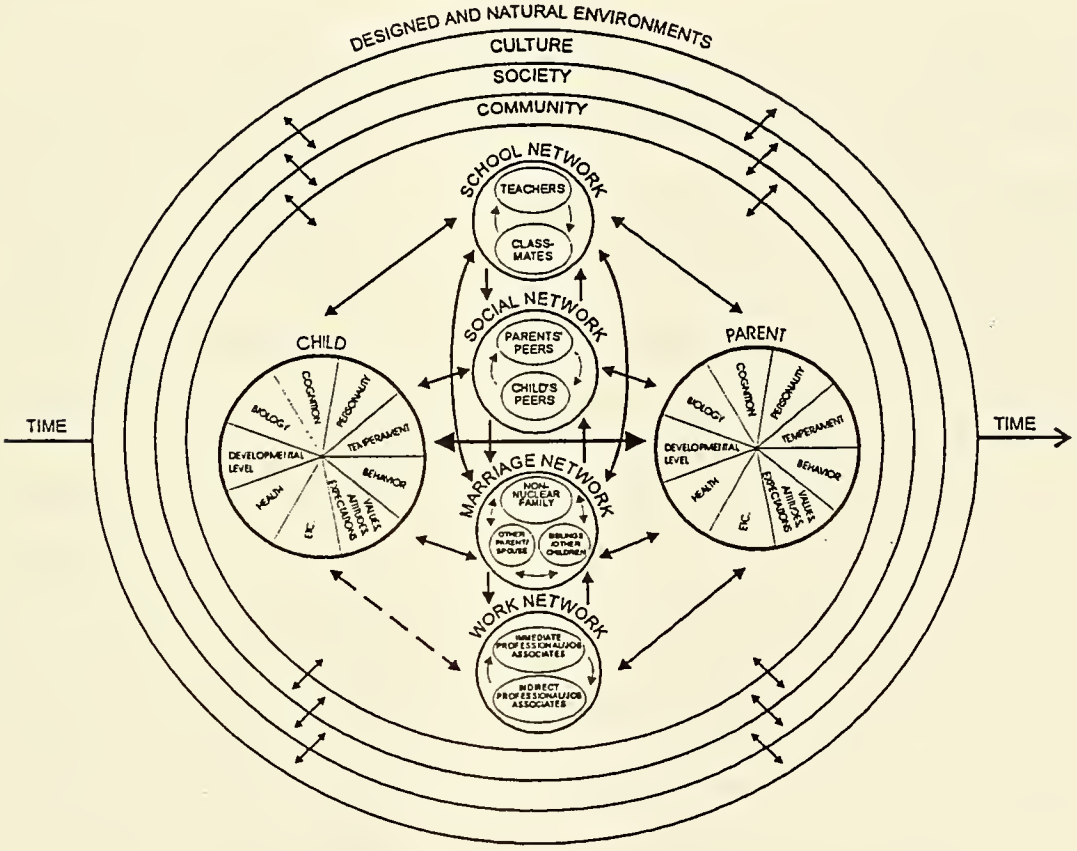
3. Developmental Ecosystems

The ecosystems framework is useful for understanding adolescent challenges for a number of reasons. First, within this system, a changing configuration of relationships constitutes the basis for human life (Lerner, 1995). Second, it avoids the tendency to see the girl with a problem as a victim by not focusing entirely on what she has done or not done that places her at risk (Gilligan, 1991). Third, it acknowledges that youth development and well being is multifaceted in nature. It involves a process that occurs over time, and involves personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors. As such, it is necessary to review and integrate findings from different literatures (e.g., studies in psychology, education, and sociology) and to explore interactions among various factors (Ianni, 1989; McWhirter, 1998; Schwartze, 1998; Takanishi, 1993a). Although the ecosystem framework cannot account for all factors operating in all situations, it provides a useful beginning to help organize these divergent literatures and perspectives in a coherent fashion.

Ecosystem therapy begins with a systems approach and " extends it to include the effects of health, behavior and relationships with larger systems such as work systems, health-care systems, social systems, and large group factors like gender, religion, ethnicity and culture." (Daw, 2001, p. 79).

It is an integrative perspective on the multiple levels of human development, which views the variables as dynamically interactive. Therefore, "changing reciprocal relations (or dynamic interactions) between individuals and the multiple contexts within which they live, comprise the essential process of human development" (Lerner, 1995, p.16).

According to Lerner's chart below, the adolescent and her context of her life cannot be separated. The interpersonal and institutional networks within which parents and children are embedded influence parent-child relationships. The individuals are then additionally influenced by their community, societal, cultural and surrounding environments (Lerner, 1995). We can see these webs of influence in Table 1.



The developmental contextual view of human development: Parent-child relations and interpersonal and institutional networks are embedded in and influenced by particular community, societal, cultural, and designed and natural environments, all changing across time (across history).

Table 1

(Lerner, 1995, p 29).

A central feature of the developing adolescent is the maturing capacity to alter the environment, and select her own role models. "Where, with whom, and how adolescents spend their time and invest their energies affect who they are and who they will become" (Feldman, 1990, p. 7).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have attempted to build a foundation for understanding the needs of adolescent girls, by looking at the risks and challenges that they may face as they grow from young girls into grown women. I began with the need to go beyond the traditional deficit model. The recent movement to look at the strengths rather than the deficits, the opportunities rather than the risks, and the hopes rather than the despair builds this post-modern foundation. I emphasized the need to look at these positive experiences within the context of race, ethnicity, and class and take into account relationship and community.

The approaches that I have found most effective are holistic, integrative views of adolescent development. There is little research on the affect of spiritual and creative development on the well being of adolescent girls, but an ecosystems approach may be a good place to begin. In the three following chapters I will show the need for an integrative approach that takes into account 'inner experience' and 'meaning making' along with outer action.

In *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for the New Century,* The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development concluded that the American institutions of family, schools, youth programs, health care organizations, and the media, "have fallen behind in

their vital functions and must now be strengthened in their respective roles and linked in a mutually reinforcing system of support for adolescents" (Carnegie Council, 1995, p.11).

I add my voice to those who are determined to make the necessary changes and do the necessary work, to insure a future of well being for all our girls, as they grow to become women.

Chapter Two

What does the current literature say about well being, resilience, and protective factors in adolescents girls?

> After the final no there comes a yes
> And on that yes the future world depends.
> No was the night. Yes is this present sun.
> Wallace Stevens (Richardson, 1986)

The goal of positive psychology is to understand and promote the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Out of this approach to optimal well being, positive youth development has emerged to describe a comprehensive and integrative approach to working with young people at risk (Lerner, 1995, Burt, 1998). This chapter will be an examination of well being, risk, resilience, and protective factors in relation to adolescents in this culture, and an exploration of the implications of these concepts for preventative intervention and positive youth development.

Personal Insight

I became interested in the concepts of resilience and positive youth development as a teenager. I didn't have a name for it at the time. If I thought to name it, I would probably have called it survival, or "I'm outta here". It happened through the intertwining of two life events: one was the death of my little sister and the other was the precarious mental health of my mother. These came together in my 13th year, a pivotal time for me.

My world imploded at first through my reading. I devoured everything I could get my hands on about the Jews' experience during the holocaust: *The Wall, Exodus, The Autobiography of Anne Frank, Mila 18.* In addition, I began reading about slavery's and the post-slavery's impact on African Americans: *Black Like Me* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* These books had enormous impact on my ripening soul. Somehow this white, middle class, small town girl could identify with the oppression, the struggle, and the noble suffering that the people in these books experienced. Instead of simply wanting to get away, I wanted to be an active part of the struggle for justice.

When my three- year-old sister, Laura, died suddenly, just before my 14th birthday, my world turned inside out and I began my search for God. My family disintegrated after Laura's death and I looked elsewhere for support. I found this support in friends, in friends' parents, in a neighborhood priest (although I am Jewish), in my piano teacher, and in an inspirational English teacher. I seemed to own a kind of homing device which would draw me towards people who thought I was great. My grandmother, Charlotte, a Russian immigrant, was the first and most steadfast of my supports. When I look back at my early years, I see that many of the components of resilience were in place. I had strong, supportive adult mentors (Garmezy, 1984), an easy, likable temperament (Haggerty et al., 1994), family cohesion in my early years (Werner, 1982), responsibility for others (Brentro, 1990), and a sense of independence (Wolin, 1993).

With the wisdom of hindsight, I now see that my interest in adolescent development began with the experiences of my own adolescence. It was an intense and anguished time for me. The years from 14 to 28 set my course in life. I moved from coping with my sister's death to graduating high school in three years; from discovering

the Beatles' *I Want to Hold Your Hand* on the jukebox of our local pizza hangout, to converging at Woodstock; I sped from Vietnam war protests shutting down the University of Rochester, to hitchhiking through California, sleeping on beaches, complete with a dress made from an Indian bedspread. I went from directing the University T-group to dropping out and working at a crisis center. I went from a wild life of exploration to joining an ashram where I woke to meditate every morning at four in the morning. These years opened me, changed me, and confused me, but the search I began at the death of my sister has continued throughout my life.

My interest in the adolescent years reasserted itself years later as my four children became teenagers. I spent time with my son and other young squatters in New York City. The squatters were runaways and rebels who had settled in to abandoned buildings and had themselves created a society of the displaced. There was desperation, yet also idealism, in their search for a life lived on the edge. I was deeply moved and began to see them as pioneers out to settle the wastelands of the urban landscape.

Later I became involved with a group of disenfranchised teens in my town, initially in their street location and later as they organized themselves into a group. I met with them, assisted in their creation of a board of directors and a group survival plan. I began to see their frustration and anger as a call for attention, answers, and for meaning. After one popular member committed suicide I created a ceremony for the group and stayed with them as they grieved. I found ways to respond to their unspoken question, "How do I make sense (meaning) out of such a senseless tragedy?"

In private practice, as a psychotherapist, I began seeing teenage girls. I was able to forge connections with most of the girls I saw in my office. I work with teens in

individual psychotherapy, conduct groups for girls, serve on the staff of Side by Side (a Youth Leadership Program), and conduct Rites of Passage for girls. My life is filled with the pulsing energy and intense challenges of adolescents. Though three of my four children are no longer adolescents, I seem to have remained interested in adolescents, and interested in making the way easier, and more inspiring for young people. It is not surprising that I want to understand Positive Youth Development and how to create the best possible programs for youth.

Positive Psychology and Development; The Science of Human Strength

The science of human strength is a newly coined term for a new direction of study (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000). It is the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. It is interested in what works, what is right, and what is improving for human beings (Sheldon & King, 2001). It suggests that it is more useful to focus on the programs and approaches that are successful with young people, rather than what has gone wrong (Brentro, 1990; Hamburg, 1992). This is the approach of Positive Youth Development. Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychology Association, wrote in a recent issue of the American Psychological Association *Monitor*:

> Pathologizing does not move us closer to the prevention of serious disorders. The major strides in prevention have largely come from building a science focused on systematically promoting the competence of individuals.
>
> We have discovered that there is a set of human strengths that are the most likely buffers against mental illness [and violence and antisocial behavior]: courage, optimism, interpersonal skills, work ethic, hope, and honesty. And perseverance. Much of the task of prevention will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to foster these virtues in young people.
>
> (Seligman, 1998, p.1)

It is this science of "human strength" or "positive psychology" as it applies to adolescents and program development, which I wish to explore in this paper. It is called resilience, positive youth development, or optimal well being. In order to understand the science of well being I will explore resilience in adolescents through the domains of psychology, education, sociology, and spirituality. In psychology, we see the effects of motivation, agency, and flow (Brendtro, 1990; Brooks, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1984; Kazdin, 1993). In education, there are many programs using positive development to create learning communities in schools (Berman, 1997; Dryfoos, 1998; Ornstein, 1994; McWhirter, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1997). In sociology, we are seeing Positive Youth Development programs that are putting the resilience findings into their programming design (American Youth Policy Forum, 1997; Burt, 1998; Carnegie Council, 1992; Lerner, 1995). In rites of passage, social-emotional learning, and service learning we see the development of resilience through spiritual development and meaning making (Billig, 2000; Cohen, 1999; Daloz, 1996; Eliade, 1975; Parks, 1986). We can use the findings of Positive Youth Development and resilience research to create powerful approaches and successful interventions for youth. Furthermore, we need to bring these findings into practical applications in schools and programs. It is essential that we listen closely to the voices of young people. There is growing agreement that this science requires a holistic, multi-dimensional approach (Carnegie Council, 1995; Lerner, 1995; Dryfoos, 1998).

What is it we want to see for our girls? Joy Dryfoos, a researcher with the Carnegie Corporation, calls the goal we are aiming for in studying and working with young people, "safe passage" (Dryfoos 1998). The adolescent years have been described as a dangerous sea voyage (Pipher, 1994), or as a long, dark tunnel, but whatever images

are used, the fact remains that we want our girls to go from girlhood into adult life with strength, safety, joy, and expansive possibilities.

1. What is well being?

A sense of personal well being is essential for optimal psychological functioning and this comes with a clear sense of personal identity (Waterman, 1992). It is marked by positive emotions and involves a sense of agency or control in life (Seligman, 1995). It is achieved through control over one's inner life, when attention is given to realistic goals and when skills match the opportunities for action, when challenge is taken on and met (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984).

Well-being is not merely the absence of dysfunction; it is the presence of personal strengths that uphold optimal functioning. "In the case of adolescents, social competence reflects the ability to utilize personal and interpersonal resources to achieve positive outcomes" (Kazdin, 1993, p.128).

Personal well-being is a state of balance that contributes to the goals of the individual and to a favorable ratio of positive to negative effects. These goals generally encompass social acceptance, and are therefore usually good for the larger world. Self-esteem and self-acceptance are present; and debilitating emotional states such as anxiety and depression are generally absent (Waterman, 1992).

A comprehensive approach to developing a sense of well being within the adolescent requires the promotion of strength-building habits of life. The Carnegie Corporation on Adolescent Development has been a leader in developing this field of inquiry. Again, Joy Dryfoos, from the Carnegie Corporation, summed up her conclusions

in one sentence, " What young people really need on a daily basis is safe places, challenging experiences, and caring people" (Dryfoos, 1998, p.5).

These three general requirements give us a basic starting point. Yet there is more to creating the basis for a satisfying and successful life. Psychologist and researcher Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi, speaks of the acquisition of habits to live by as the first task of adolescents. Just as important is that they "feel that their actions are worthwhile, that the goals society presents make sense. … They must learn how to enjoy what they are doing and, and they must learn how to give meaning to the events unfolding in their lives." (Csikzentmihalyi, 1984, p. 4). We want young people to be able to be surrounded by those safe places and caring people in order to feel inspired and motivated to do something, be something great, to make meaning. They must have opportunities to be of value in the world in order to develop a sense of their own value (Brentro, 1990). This is "meaning making", and it exerts an influence on our culture and is of particular concern to adolescents (Parks, 1986).

It is my hope that by understanding the actual risks present in the adolescent passage and the specific resilience and protective factors available to adolescent girls, we will then be better able to provide them with solutions and programs to meet their needs, encourage their growth, and allow them to embrace a healthy adulthood.

2. How do we define risk?

In my work as a clinician and researcher, I take a positive approach, looking through the lenses of strengths and potentials rather than that of deficits; therefore I am reluctant to use the developmental psychopathology risk model (Sheldon & King, 2001;

VanHasselt, 1995). In our society's singular focus of attention on adolescents over the past 25 years, the general tendency has been to approach them as a problem (Brentro, 1990; Carnegie Council, 1995; Hamburg, 1992; Males, 1996; Lerner, 1995). This has served to fragment the complex individuals that they are, the communities they live in, and the system of services with which we approach them (Burt, 1998; Males, 1996). It also gives the impression that the majority of youth are in trouble. This is not true. Though they all face challenges, most young people get through adolescence without major problems (Dryfoos, 1998). Yet there are many indicators that increasing numbers of adolescents are at risk of being unprepared and unsuccessful. Adolescents today face greater risks to their current and future health than ever before (Lerner, 1995; Carnegie Council, 1992; 1995; Takanishi, 1993b).

Every adolescent girl has her own unique mix of vulnerabilities and strengths. This mix will determine, to a large extent, whether she will experience problems. The *likelihood* of problems is the RISK, or more accurately, the possibility of risk. In this perception of risk an adolescent need not have acted out or demonstrated problems to be called "at-risk". They all possess the potential for risk. It could then be said, therefore, that all youth are "at-risk". (Lerner, 1995; McWhirter, 1998; Grotberg, 1995: Resnick, 1997). When specific risk factors exist in a young person, the probability of dealing successfully with challenges and difficulties decreases. When multiple risk factors are present, the probability of acting out behavior increases (Dryfoos, 1998; Haggerty, 1995; Resnick, 1997). Risk predisposes adolescents towards specific negative outcomes. But it is best viewed, not as a marker, but as a process which links risk

conditions with specific outcomes (Heatherington, 1994). Risk, therefore, is a flexible, fluid process.

We can see this process of risk as a continuum where one thing leads to another. At one end of the continuum would be those with minimal risks and many protective factors; at the other would be those at imminent risk, leading ultimately to actual high risk activities (McWhirter, 1998; Takanishi, 1993a).

The literature shows that regular life events are a major source of stress for adolescents, especially in those who are depressed or anxious, or experience problems in social or school areas; and in those with low self-esteem (Brooks, 1992; Bobo, 1986; Dryfoos, 1998; Ornstein, 1994). These daily stressors may be strong predictors of the psychological health of adolescents (Bobo, 1986; Dumont, 1999). For girls, the stressors are often connected to a loss of control.

> Thus for adolescent girls to develop capacities to resist stresses that lead them toward negative risks ... they need experiences in which they can exert control over more than their bodies, sexuality, or appearance; can connect to their own worth, to a positive belief system, and to others who will commit to them; and can experience support and encouragement to learn and persist in the face of struggles.
> (Debold et al, 1999, p. 190)

3. Resilience

Resilience is defined as the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity (Grotberg, 1995). Resilience is the ability to bounce or spring back into shape after being pressed or stretched (Wolin, 1993). It is determined not so much by outside success as by a positive sense of self, a capacity for intimacy, and a feeling that life is meaningful (Garbarino, 1999).

The resilient child is one who works well, plays well, loves well, and expects well (Garmezy, 1984).

> The resilient child is an active, humorous, confident, and competent child who is prepared to take risks, although not unrealistically; can alter his approach flexibly; and, as a result of repeated successful coping experiences, has reason to feel confident of both inner and outer resources.
>
> (Anthony, 1987, p.17-18)

Resilient individuals are those who do not simply avoid the negative outcomes associated with risk, but display adequate or better adaptation in the face of adversity (Wolin, 1993; Werner, 1982).

There are many adolescent girls who face difficult events and circumstances, and make it through to become healthy, strong adults. Some grow stronger and even more compassionate through adversity. The danger of risk to adolescents lies in the accumulation of risk factors or multiple stressors. This is often prevalent amongst the poor and minorities. These populations have less access to intervention, fewer actual resources, and more possibilities of stressors and risks (Males, 1996; Hamburg, 1992).

There is a social danger in identifying risk and resilience. If some, within a given population, can succeed, then those cases can be used to show that it is not the fault of economics or racism. We must caution against using aspects of risk to blame at-risk youths for their problems (Garmezy, 1984). A word of caution is also in order about the narrow definition of success often used: high grades, college, and a lucrative job. We must leave room in the definition of success for such attributes as faith, goodness, purpose, good relationships, and peacefulness; the ability to make meaning.

Resilience is described in a number of ways by various researchers. When described as hardiness, it comprises of control, commitment, and challenge. The

individual is able to make decisions for her own good and cope with what comes (control); have a sense of purpose and available resources (commitment); and feel challenged rather than defeated (challenge) (Debolt, 1999).

The Wolins' "seven resiliencies" list consists of insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor, and conscience. These are based on the belief that everyone has these in varying degrees and that they can be developed and encouraged (Wolin, 1993).

Another approach places resilience into three general areas:

External supports are provided around the child and are identified as " I HAVE" characteristics. This would include access to resources and services, accepting relationships, stable home and school environment, consistent rules, and religion.

Internal supports are developed within the child and are identified as " I AM" characteristics. This would be a personality and temperament that is loving, strong, and independent, and with a sense of trust, hope, and faith.

Social supports are acquired by the child and are identified as " I CAN" characteristics. These are the interpersonal skills and creativity, persistence, humor, communication, along with problem-solving skills and impulse control (Grotberg, 1995).

A resilient person has the following attributes: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose with a belief in the future

(National Youth Development, 2002). When we look at Positive Youth Development Programs, we will find that they work closely to build and encourage these specific attributes.

4. Protective Factors

A buffer or protective factor is one that decreases the probability of an undesirable outcome in the presence of a risk. Resilience is developed when buffering processes encourage the individual to react to risk effectively (Heatherington, 1996). Research has been aimed at finding protective factors or practices. In the past 25 years the research has grown extensively and generally agrees that there are three categories of protective factors:

a. personality features such as self-esteem and confidence

b. family cohesion

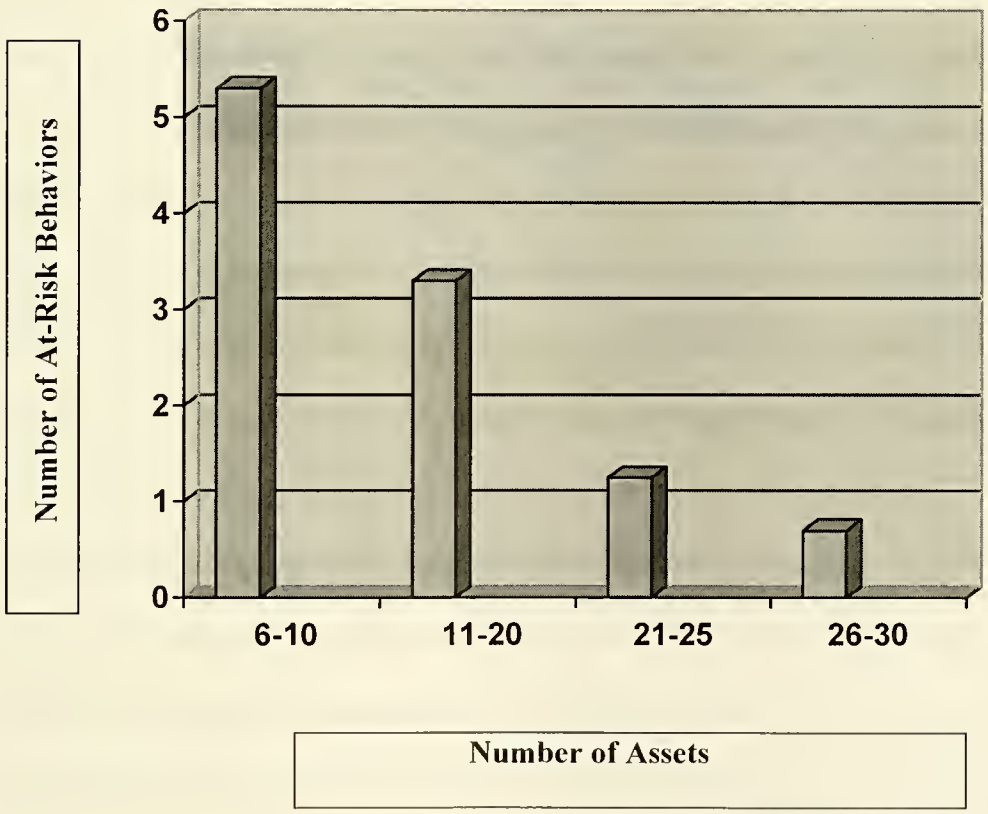
c. availability of external support systems (Haggerty et al, 1994).

Another way to describe protective factors is to label them as assets. Daniel Perkins from the University of Florida divides assets into internal and external. The external assets include family, parental and other adult support and control, positive peer influence, and structured use of time, especially involvement in music, school, or community activities. Internal assets are commitment to education, positive values, and social competence and skills such as positive self-esteem and decision-making ability. Keith and Perkins' study of 13,000 adolescents in Michigan showed that the greater the number of assets a young person has the less likely she (or he) is to engage in risk behavior (Resnick, 1997).

These findings are displayed in the following graph where we see that an accumulation of the number of assets lowers the likelihood of risk behavior. This finding is significant in relation to programming for youth. If we can create and strengthen assets in school and after school, we will be preventing risky behaviors before they begin. Table 2 shows the direct relation between assets and behaviors.

Table 2:

At-Risk Behavior by # of Assets in 7th, 8th and 11th Graders



(Resnick, 1997, p. 133)

Some of the traditional research in resilience and identity development appears deficient in relation to the struggles that girls face. Research has shown that adolescent girls are more stressed, more depressed (Ornstein, 1994), experience more eating disorders and self-mutilation (Egan, 1997), face greater anxiety over their looks

(Brumberg, 1998), experience a greater drop in self-esteem (Ornstein, 1994), and attempt suicide more frequently than boys (Takanishi, 1993a). Girls are more concerned about peer relationships and opinions of others than boys, and this leaves them more at the mercy of external, often harsh, judges such as peer groups and the media (Gilligan, 1991). These challenges are multidimensional and are influenced by race, culture, and economics in addition to individual differences (Debold, 1999; Leadbeater, 1996).

Traditional approaches to healthy development often deny the psychological impact of relationships in girls' lives (Gilligan, 1991). Following a traditional path of "success" can mean isolating oneself from one's community, boyfriend, or mother. A successful girl leaves these relationships behind as she moves forward often propelled out of her community completely. It may seem to many girls that they must sacrifice their own recognized accomplishments of relationship, helpfulness, and kindness for success and accomplishment (Debold, 1999). What a difficult choice they are faced with: succeed and be isolated or fail and betray the hopes of many, including herself.

In the same way that we must acknowledge gender differences in resilience, we must take cultural and ethnic differences into account. For adolescents from close-knit ethnic and/or minority groups, specific ethnicity is a critical factor in the development of identity and self-esteem (Leadbeater, 1996; Feldman, 1990). A multicultural approach to advocating safe passage for girls' means recognizing that girls' needs vary depending on their race, ethnicity, and ability, and ensuring that outreach is made to all girls. Accepted understandings of resilience and protective factors often represent white middle-class values and models. These often rely on a level of self-regard and individualism, which is not a core construct in other cultures. (Debold, 1999; Leadbeater, 1996).

Chapter Three

What is positive youth development and how can it be applied to programs for adolescents?

"If the world is to change for the better, [we must discover] a deeper sense of responsibility toward the world, which means responsibility toward something higher than self." (Havel, 1990, p.29).

Introduction

This chapter is a look at young people changing both themselves and the world for the better. They are doing it in relationships, in groups, in dynamic programs. In the beginning, I will describe the Positive Youth Development Model for programs and then look at some approaches that promote positive youth development: self-esteem, social emotional learning, service learning programs, citizenship building, and rites of passage. Finally, in this chapter I will look at the application of positive youth development in one model program. The model program is The Power of Hope located on Whidbey Island off the coast of Seattle, Washington.

Positive Youth Development Explained

As we become more aware of the conditions that young people may encounter, it becomes essential that we find ways to create programs that protect them from the

possible dangers lurking in this transitional stage of adolescence; and that we provide them with tools they can use for a healthy transition.

It is no longer possible to leave the responsibility of positive youth development to one person, place, or family. Our families, our communities, our states, our nation, and each of us must share the responsibility. Community based youth programs are a vital part of this (Burt, 1998; Lerner, 1995). Given the pervasive problems and challenges facing today's youth, there is probably no community where such programs are not needed (Hamburg, 1992; Lerner, 1995; Dryfoos, 1998).

In positive youth development, the broad spectrum of developmental needs of the adolescent should be met. These are the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, vocational, moral, and spiritual needs. In recent years it is more difficult for youth to find opportunities to feel connected to their community and therefore to receive the support they need (Dryfoos, 1998; Garbarino, 1999; Resnick, 1997; Pipher, 1994).

Studies have shown that as much as 40% of youth's time is spent unstructured and often alone (Carnegie Council, 1995; Csikszentmihalyi, 1984). More youth are growing up in impoverished neighborhoods where violence and hopelessness are pervasive. They have fewer options or life choices. Their lives are often characterized by inadequate education, few employment opportunities, and little encouragement to make positive life choices and develop strong competencies (Dryfoos, 1998; Hamburg, 1992; Anthony 1987). Poverty is associated with a number of detrimental outcomes such as drug and alcohol use, school drop out, and delinquency and crime (Lerner, 1995; McWhirter, 1998). This is why Positive Youth Development Programs are essential.

The Positive Youth Development movement is a multidimensional approach, incorporating individual growth and development with a belief in the necessity of encouraging connections and community building through youth programs. It is the process through which adolescents, with the assistance of caring adults, seek to meet their needs and develop their competencies in order to become successful adults (Carnegie Council, 1995; Dryfoos, 1998; Lerner, 1995). It means that youth have access to the opportunities they need, in order to acquire a wide range of competencies and to create significant connections to self, peers, adults, and the community (National Clearinghouse, 2000). The holistic, least targeted approaches show academic benefits without directly pursuing school outcomes (DeAngelis, 2001).

We can begin to see that Positive Youth Development is an ongoing process wherein the developmental needs of youth are met, problem behaviors are addressed and prevented, and youth are empowered to develop the skills and competencies needed to become healthy, contributing adults. By providing engaging opportunities and positive relationships, programs keep youth from negative involvements, expose them to positive self-esteem enhancing activities, and help them to develop the resilience to face life's stresses and challenges (Burt, 1998). Healthy youth development aims to promote and prevent, not to treat and re-mediate (Carnegie Council, 1995). It uses a developmental framework rather than a deficit-based model (DeAngelis, 2001).

The participants at the Youth Development Issue Forum identified six key ingredients of successful youth development programs:

1. A comprehensive strategy with clear mission and goals.
2. Committed, caring, professional leadership.

3. Youth-centered activities in youth-accessible facilities.
4. Culturally competent and diverse programs.
5. Youth ownership and involvement.
6. A positive focus including all youth.

(The National Clearinghouse on Youth and Families, 1996)

The Youth Development Forum considers positive youth development to be more proactive and holistic than intentionally preventive. The Positive Youth Development approach encourages communities to shift from a problem-focused approach to an assets-development/community-involvement model. These programs are offered to all young people, not just the ones labeled dysfunctional, juvenile delinquent, or potentially pregnant. They are designed to engage the talents, abilities, and enthusiasm of every young person in the country. Such a program offers opportunities and not simply services. It holds high expectations of youths' abilities and develops their leadership skills along with other more specific skills. This view of youth is an integrated approach that sees them as individuals with problems, strengths, hopes, and dreams. The programs usually offer a place to interact with others from different backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Most importantly, it builds connections from both within the program and from the larger community. This connection creates purpose and ignites hope (Dryfoos, 1998; Lerner, 1995; Carnegie Council 1995; Burt, 1998; National Clearinghouse, 1996).

There are three key components of a youth development approach:

- Viewing young people and families as partners rather than as clients, and involving them in designing and delivering programs and services;
- Giving all youth access to both prevention and intervention services and programs that meet their developmental needs; and
- Offering youth opportunities to develop relationships with caring, supportive adults.

(National Clearinghouse on Families &Youth, 1996)

By looking at the program practices of actual programs as shown in Table 3, we see what is important and how they use the positive approach and we begin to see the commonalities among successful programs.

Table 3:

Program Practices of National and Community-Based Youth- Serving Organizations by Youth Needs

Safety/ Structure	**Belonging/ Group Membership**	**Self- worth Contributing**	**Independence/ Control over Life**	**Closeness/ Relationships**	**Competence/ Mastery**	**Diverse Opportunitie Exploration**
-Safe environment -structure -age appropriate activities -regular meetings -codes of conduct	-small groups -flexibility grouping -uniforms/ symbols of membership -recognize ethnic & cultural diversity	-peer tutoring -active participation -project presentations	decision-making	-youth/adult partnerships -role models -family & community involvement	-progression -achievement -accomplishment -rewards	-flexibility -range of experience -informal education -hands-on experience learning

(Pittman , 1992, p. 33)

In a society where the values of individualism are considered as healthy, normal, and optimal, the female need for relationship is ignored and we deny girls a transcendent development, a way of knowing, that is their right. Parker Palmer calls this "the knowledge arising from love" and claims it has as its goal

> the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community, and our knowing becomes a way of reweaving that community's bonds"
> (Palmer, 1983, p. 8)

Positive Youth Development, when successful, builds upon this need for connections with its commitment to creating caring communities, and thereby weaves a way of knowing available to all participants.

A form of Positive Youth development is the "Circle of Power" described by Martin Brokenleg in a seminar I attended. He is a Lakota psychologist who understands the need of youth for connections. He described the p I attended and in the book he co-authored. This is a model being used with youth at-risk that is based on traditional Native American educational practices. The four necessary attributes are pictured in a circle (a medicine wheel), with the individual in the center.

1. The spirit of Belonging. This means belonging to a family, a community, and to the natural world. Those who lack this attribute are isolated, distrustful, and more prone to gang participation, promiscuity, and overly dependent behavior.
2. The spirit of Mastery. This can be called competence, motivation, or advocacy (children need to develop cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual competence). Those who lack this attribute fail or give up easily and are prone to cheating or delinquency.
3. The spirit of Independence. Young people need to have a sense of autonomy and power over their lives. Those who lack this quality are often helpless or irresponsible and can be prone to bullying, manipulating, or defying behavior.
4. The spirit of Generosity. Altruism, sharing, and giving bring both strength

and joy. Those who lack this quality are often selfish, anti-social, or cruel.

(Brendtro et al., 1990)

The "Circle of Power" is a working example of the Carnegie Foundation's attributes of a community-based program. These are:

1. Provide opportunities for youth to engage in positive social relationships both with peers and adults [Belonging];
2. Teach youth important life skills [Mastery];
3. Offer youth opportunities to contribute to the community [Generosity];
4. Provide an encouraging group experience for youth to be part of [Belonging];
5. Build a sense of self-competence in youth [Independence].

(Carnegie Council, 1995)

Effective programs work by helping individuals to build these attributes; ensuring that there are caring adults in each young person's life, and striving to develop some sense of security in the lives of all youth. (Dryfoos, 1998; National Youth Development Information Center, 2002).

Meaning Making Approaches in Positive Youth Development

Interdisciplinary approaches are the ones most likely to succeed. Programs that use the arts to build leadership, outdoor activities with classroom learning, projects and travel with math education, and service with education seem to stand out (Billigs, 2000; Cousins, 1998; DeAngelis, 2001).

"People who find their lives meaningful usually have a goal that is challenging enough to take up all their energies, a goal that can give significance to their lives. We may refer to this process as achieving purpose." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p. 216). As a therapist, program director, and former teacher, I have been experimenting for many years with the interface between therapy and education. I generally assume, almost intuitively, the interconnections. It is difficult to teach today without doing some therapy, such as behavior modification for discipline techniques, self-esteem building, and the many forms of inter-dynamic problem solving that classroom teachers must be ready to perform at a moment's notice. Therapy is often, or perhaps always, educational: teaching coping skills, finding and practicing new behaviors that work for the individual, clarifying and developing values to live by.

In working with adolescent girls, I strive to recognize and develop the three qualities described by Dr. Garbarino: the sense of self, the ability to form intimate relationships, and a feeling that life is meaningful. Sometimes I have to find these qualities before the girls can.

> I start from the belief that, every infant contains a divine spark. I believe this as a psychologist, I know it as a person and a parent. Recognizing the sacred self is the foundation of understanding that human development as something more than engineering, plumbing and electronics.
> (Garbarino, 1999, p.2)

A thriving program for adolescent girls is one that invites girls to join the world. It welcomes and guides them. It is one where different forms of knowing are honored and practiced: conversation, creativity, receptive listening, mindfulness, and dialogue. It promotes an atmosphere of respect for the self and the other where acceptance of diversity and difference becomes the norm. Courageous acts and creative

thoughts are encouraged and recognized. It is one where girls look out for each other. The process becomes quite a journey!

A few illustrations of positive youth development approaches that work to develop these qualities follow. I will look briefly at social-emotional learning and self-esteem, service learning, forming community connections, and rites of passage. Due to space limitations there are many approaches we will not look at such as non-violent/ peer mediation programs and expeditionary learning. As in any interdisciplinary approach, there is a great deal of overlap and blending. Well-developed programs often become a type of rite of passage, most service learning and rites of passage build community connections, and all strong interdisciplinary programs develop social-emotional learning.

1. Community Connections

A community is normally thought to be a town or city or neighborhood, but community can be an active faith group, a school group, or any active assemblage. It is geography of influence where people are joined, youth to adults, in multi-age groups. There are activities and traditions and universal truths of justice, caring, and belonging. It takes a community to ensure a healthy, successful transition of adolescents into adults. When society embraces a shared responsibility and accepts a stake in nurturing the upcoming generation, teenagers will not be viewed as an unpleasant inconvenience (Benson, 1997). Then the environment can enhance ways to nurture the capacity to act on behalf of the common good (Daloz, 1996). The need for community is universal; it is a sense of belonging, being connected to people, ideas and values that make life meaningful (Sergiovanni, 1994). Effective, working communities promote positive development.

> The environments that foster development are ones that are open, nuturant, and participatory, where people model and live prosocial values and where conflict is handled instructively and effectively. They are environments where young people are provided opportunities for taking the perspectives of others and reflecting on their own attitudes and beliefs. They are places where young people are able to learn from conflict and engage in equalizing dialogue about meaningful issues... These processes are deeply relational in nature.
>
> (Elias, 1997, p.191)

Schools are communities where adolescents spend a great amount of time. Some are more effective communities than others (Sergiovanni, 1997). A recent study of over 12,000 adolescents found that parent-family connectedness and connectedness to school were protective factors against emotional problems (Klein & Perkins, 1997). This dual connectedness is described as a full-service community where connections would be facilitated in all directions (Dryfoos, 1998).

I have participated in a number of not-for-profit endeavors, serving on boards studying community development in action. It has become more important to me in recent years to find ways to build healing, supportive communities. In this country where the individual is practically deified, community becomes more essential, and at the same time, it is more challenging. Cultivation of citizenship can only happen within the community (Berman, 1997). Commitment to the common good can best be formed within communities (Daloz, 1996). Harvard researcher Robert Putnam (2000) speaks of our low levels of civic engagement. "Bridging capital" is the form of social capital that is outward focused and includes people across diverse backgrounds and builds broader identities. To build this essential bridging (inclusive) social capital we must connect with people unlike ourselves. It is then that we create meaning and find purpose. It is not

possible to develop well-being in adolescent girls without acknowledging the importance of family and community to make meaning in their lives.

One way to ensure that young people have access to what they need in order to develop positively is to create youth-empowering environments. Building and rebuilding communities is central to reinventing youth services. Community/Youth Partnerships offer a promising paradigm. These youth-empowering environments offer young people the opportunity to experience feeling a part of a supportive community, where their needs for mastery of skills and tasks are met, and where they can feel involved in determining their own future. They must find a way to contribute or give back. This is important. If there is one lesson learned through years of attempting to resolve difficult social issues, it is that the growth and well being of youth and communities are interconnected (National Clearinghouse, 1996).

2. Self-esteem and Social Emotional Learning.

Our lives, and the lives of our children are filled with interactions with others that impact the quality of life that we will live. For most of us these human interactions happen every day, many times a day. Yet, there has been little in the way of methods taught to enhance these communications. Social-Emotional Learning, also called Emotional Intelligence, is the ability to utilize aspects of one's life that,

> enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development.

(Elias, 1997, p. 2)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Emotional Intelligence Education (EI) may be provided by families, communities and by schools. Effective SEL programs result in enhanced self-control, improved behavior, and better conflict-resolution skills, which in turn affect children's ability to learn (Cohen, 1999, Goleman, 1995).

> Emotional Intelligence is a different way of being smart. It includes knowing what your feelings are and using your feelings to make good decisions in life. It's being able to manage distressing moods well and control impulses. It's being motivated and remaining hopeful and optimistic when you have setbacks in working towards goals. It's empathy; knowing what the people around you are feeling. And it's social skill - getting along well with other people, managing emotions in relationships, being able to persuade or lead others.

(Goleman quoted in O'Neil, 1996, p. 6)

Self-esteem is thought by many researchers to be a key factor in resilience and positive outcomes for youth. A fundamental aspect of self-esteem involves self-respect and caring for others. Self-esteem is defined by Robert Brooks (1992) as appreciating one's own worth and value and being accountable to self and others. Children with high self-esteem see success as predicated on their own efforts and abilities and view mistakes as experiences from which to learn. Beane (1998) suggests that Self-esteem be seen not only in connection with the individual , but as part of an integrated view of self and social relations. Then we would see that meaning emerges from the environment, thus people learn about themselves as they learn about the world; that self- esteem involves values and morality; and that self-esteem must be accompanied by self-efficacy, the belief that we can change things.

3. Service Learning

Young people are yearning to find deeper meaning in life; often they find this in service (Gergon, 1999). Service learning is a teaching strategy that links community service experience to classroom instruction. To be successful, it must meet the needs of the community, foster civic responsibility, connect to the curriculum, and include time for reflection (Berkas, 1997; Billig, 2000).

Ernest Boyer, long-time president of the Carnegie Foundation, believes that higher education must pay more attention to preparing students to be responsible citizens rather than simply scholars and professionals. This is often done through service-learning projects where students are regarded as worker-scholars and learn through real-world experience (Marriott, 1996).

- Recent studies show that students who participate in high school government or community service projects are more likely to vote and become active in their communities. This is true regardless of socioeconomic status, grades, or aptitude. Besides giving them a civic identity, it helps them to believe that they can make difference in the world (Youniss & Yates, 1997).
- Students in elementary and middle school service-learning programs show reduced levels of alienation and behavioral problems (Stephens, 1995; Yates, 1997).
- Middle and high school students who are engaged in quality service-learning programs showed increases in measures of personal and social responsibility, communication and sense of educational competence (Weiler, et. al., 1998).

- Students who engag in service learning rank responsibility as a more important value and reported a higher sense of responsibility to their school than comparison groups (Leming, 1998).
- Students who engage in service-learning are more likely to treat each other kindly, help each other, and care about doing their best (Berkas, 1997).
- Students who engage in service learning are more likely to increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Yates & Younnis, 1997).
- Middle school male students report increased self-esteem and fewer behavioral problems after engaging in service learning (Switzer, et. al., 1995).

In a study of over 1000 students at 16 sites of Teen Outreach Programs, it was found that a successful intervention to prevent adolescent problems was related to promoting both a sense of autonomy and relatedness, and to the self-reliance, challenge, and satisfaction of successful volunteer experiences. (American Youth Policy Forum, 1997). Adolescents who participate in prosocial behavior, defined as church and volunteer activities, show the most consistently high academic achievement and low rates of involvement in risky behavior (Eccles, 1999). Service learning programs are now a part of many high school and college curriculums and are even appearing in elementary and middle schools.

4. Citizenship and Social Responsibility

Berman (1997) posits that the concept of citizenship is a key to comprehension of what democracy is and how it works. Students need to move beyond conceptual

understanding to learning experiences that develop participatory skills and civic dispositions for exercising the rights and carrying out the responsibilities and duties of citizenship in a democracy. Three types of participatory skills are interacting, monitoring, and influencing. Interacting pertains to skills of communication and cooperation in political and civic life. Monitoring involves skills needed to track the work of political leaders and institutions of government. And influencing refers to skills used to affect outcomes in political and civic life, such as the resolution of public issues. It is important to add the need for thinking skills without which there can be no freedom.

There seems to be considerable correlation between social responsibility and participation in community service. Students who engage in high quality service-learning programs show an increase in the degree to which they feel aware of community needs, believe that they can make a difference, and are committed to service now and later in life (Melchior, 1999; Berkas, 1997). Participatory skills and civic dispositions needed for effective and responsible citizenship in a democracy can be developed through the following kinds of learning experiences:

- Student participation in democratically conducted student organizations;
- School-based community service that is connected systematically to the school's curriculum and classroom instruction (Billig, 2000);
- Cooperative learning activities in which groups of students cooperate to pursue a common goal, such as inquiring about a public issue or responding to a community problem (Conrad & Hedin, 1991);
- Mock trial and student government where students learn about history and democracy.

The many processes practiced in these activities are interdependent. Perry (1970) found that interacting with many, different perspectives encouraged the development of ethical and intellectual development.

> Moral and political development is fostered by experiencing healthy relationships, caring for others, listening to and appreciating the other's perspective, and entering into dialogue with those with whom one is in conflict in order to reestablish balance in the relationship.
>
> (Berman, 1997, p 102)

5. Rites of Passage

In my experience working with adolescents, I have participated in many ceremonies, rituals, and rites of passage, which help develop and strengthen families and communities. Rites of passage ceremonies can create connected places of meaning in young lives. I have found adolescence is a transitional time when the inherited beliefs and paths are questioned and tested. When many young people are seeking to find a truth on which to base their life, rites of passage can offer some good choices. Without this truth they experience a profound meaninglessness and hence, a lack of direction or purpose. Anthropologist Laurens van der Post described the difference between modern day people and the Bushmen of Africa whom he called "natural man."

> It is one of the laws of life that new meaning must be lived before it can be known….. Man's awareness has been so narrowed that it has become almost entirely a rational process, an intellectual process associated with the outside, the so-called physical, objective world. The invisible realities are no longer real. This narrowed awareness rejects all sorts of things that make up the totality of the human

> spirit: intuition, instincts, and feelings, all the things to which natural man has access.
>
> (Van der Post, 1961, p. 4)

It is in rites of passage that young people are given places to experience meaning, that deep sense of knowing. Historically, rites of passage have been used to: mark a change, clarify and test values, create and define meaning, bind the individual to the community, elaborate and re-affirm the purpose of life, and orient the youth to the future (Eliade, 1975). We might notice that this list has many overlaps with the list of attributes for Positive Youth Development: clear mission, caring adults, a positive focus, and youth involvement. I would propose that effective Positive Youth Development programs often act as rite of passage opportunities for young people.

Rites of passage serve to mark and celebrate an individual's transition from one stage of life to the next. This practice of ritualizing the normal demarcations between the stages of life reflects an ancient wisdom. Transitions are turbulent even traumatic times. The way an individual negotiates these crises depends to a large extent on the value placed on them by society. When these times are marked, honored, and given dignity by the larger society the focus becomes one of pride and rising to the challenge (Keene, 1989). Since all rites of passage are about connection and meaning, the connection must be made to that which is larger than the individual: to the Great Mystery, to the earth, to our community and always to one's self. This allows the individual a chance to break out of the narrow confines of her/his own self-centered existence.

> Young people don't know whom or what to believe in. They don't know what is coming next. They hope for the best, but fear the worst. Sometimes the world feels like a fragmented, whirling mass reeling out of control. We feel scared, angry, and sad. We give up, we say we don't care, but we do.
>
> (Gaines, 1992, p. 261)

Instinctually realizing the need for rites of passage, for markers in their lives, teens often form their own. If we look around in both our cities and rural towns, we will see these contrived versions of rites of passage. Some modern versions of initiation are: team sports, driving cars, tattoos and piercing, running away from home, gang involvement, drug, alcohol and cigarette use, and pregnancy.

Dangerous and destructive behavior is not an inherent expression of the adolescent years, but exploration and questioning behavior is. Poverty, despair and isolation – not irrational youthfulness --are more likely the cause of violence, crime, and abuse (Ponton, 1997).

Rites of Passage allow for spiritual growth and a sense of spirit, which connect us to an existence beyond our solitary self. Therefore a relationship with spirit, with meaning, becomes essential to adolescents' development. With young women we must search for that which Thomas Merton named a "hidden wholeness" in life. Authentic spirituality wants to open us to truth --- whatever truth may be, wherever truth may lead.

> Such a spirituality does not dictate where we must go, but trusts that any path walked with integrity will take us to a place of knowledge. Such a spirituality encourages us to welcome diversity and conflict, to tolerate ambiguity, and to embrace paradox.
>
> (Palmer, 1983, p. xi).

Herbert Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound said, " I consider it the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: An enterprising curiosity; an undefeatable spirit; tenacity in pursuit; readiness for self-denial; and above all, compassion." (Cousins, 1998,p 78). Experiential learning programs modeled by

Outward Bound are rites of passage and stand as strong examples of Positive Youth Development programs.

Conclusions

The need to focus on holistic learning experiences -- the integration of intellectual, social, and emotional aspects of learning-- has been voiced by many (Brentro, 1990; Carnegie Council, 1995; Goleman, 1995). There is a growing body of research linking intellectual, social, and emotional processes with a paradigm shift in the social sciences and education. This research, along with the emergence of new disciplines such as Women's Studies; Pan-African Studies; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Studies, are all moving the focus into interdisciplinary approaches (Debold, 1999, Takanishi, 1993b). An expanding literature base reinforces the point of view that cognitive, social, and emotional processes are inextricably linked. For example, recent theories of cognitive development, especially those of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), and Gilligan (1982), clearly acknowledge the role played by social context and interpersonal relationships. It is also recognized that learning is facilitated or hampered by emotions (Goleman 1995), and that depressed mood states are often correlated with decreased motivation in the classroom (Seligman 1995).

I believe that the best solutions for assisting young people at risk focus both on helping individuals and strengthening communities. Today's young people are looking for a way to contribute to the community and meet their need to be a part of the larger social fabric. They are increasingly living in communities that may not offer the safety or structure that young people need to grow and thrive. Far too often, they receive little

guidance as they attempt to navigate the complexities of life. Yet we are seeing progress in many areas. Faith-based partnerships utilizing the influence of the churches have actively pursued dynamic youth work (Cnaan, 2001). We see exciting developments in Outward Bound 's expeditionary learning in city schools (Cousins, 1995). We see it in the huge upsurge in Service Learning programs in schools (Billings, 2000). We see it in a strong movement to:

> ...develop an integrated service delivery system that addresses the complex, interrelated needs of adolescents and their families. A critical element is a positive youth development focus, which begins with a view of young people as assets to their schools, families, and communities. The shift in thinking over the last decade towards the ecological model of child development has done much to alert practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to key contextual factors that make a difference in the lives of youth at risk. The best programs see a youth holistically and strive to provide supports to youth and their families at each point along the prevention-treatment continuum.
>
> (Burt, 1998, p. 274)

Current findings indicate the usefulness of resilience and protective factors in developing Positive Youth programs for the empowerment and well being of adolescent girls. There is no one perfect formula; but many powerful ideas and many existing successful programs already exist. These programs are interested in changing the world through a deep sense of caring and responsibility. It is the young people who are the agents of change.

The Power of Hope: An example of a Positive Youth Development Program

I will describe Power of Hope, a short, intensive summer experience for youth in order to give a clearer picture of how a youth program can meet many of the goals of Positive Youth Development. I will interface the list of needs for young people prepared by The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth (1996) with the description of the program components of Power of Hope that appear to meet some of these needs. The list of What Young People Need is: a sense of personal safe, structure, a sense of belonging or membership, a sense of self-worth that is predicated on achievement and character, mastery of skills, access to learning opportunities beyond the classroom, responsibility, spirituality, self-awareness, and support and guidance from caring adults (National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, 1996).

Power of Hope (POH), in Washington State, is an innovative program fostering empowerment through the arts for high school age students. It is part of the Whidbey Institute for Earth, Spirit, and the Human Future on Whidbey Island.

Founders Peggy Taylor and Charles Murphy began POH six years ago. Taylor was a founder and long-time editor of the popular *New Age Magazine*. Murphy was a recording artist and the former director of the YMCA Earth Service Corps.

Power of Hope brings together teens from diverse backgrounds with a dynamic team of artists, musicians, dancers, writers, actors, nature educators and community activists. In a supportive, high-energy atmosphere the young people explore creativity through the arts. They gain communication skills, learn from people different from

themselves, and discover ways to take an active role in their own communities back home.

I had been asked to be a guest staff member for a one-week session in the summer of 2000. The following section relates my experience during the week in June.

A long, twisting, jungle-like road leads me up to the Institute. This is not exactly your centrally located hub. I have already flown more than 3000 miles from Albany, New York to Seattle, Washington. From the Seattle airport I drive through Seattle to the ferry site north of the city. There amidst the spectacular backdrop of the blue ocean bay surrounded by mountains I can see the 60-mile long island that is my destination. After the ferry crossing and a short drive, I am at the office of the program. Slowly people begin to arrive. While I am waiting I walk through the grounds where I see beautiful fields and gardens, and a farmhouse building with many bedrooms for the staff. I claim my room with yellow curtained windows looking down on the large meeting deck. Back up the hill I come to the newly built grand meeting hall. A large commercial kitchen, a dining room and a stunning meeting room that is large, sunny, open. Scattered throughout the large room are bright rugs,

cushions, and wall-hangings. I see many musical instruments as I step through the row of French doors out onto the expansive lawn.

I soon meet Peggy, a quiet, thoughtful woman of middle years and endless energy and Charlie, a tall gangly, expressive man with a constant twinkle in his eye. Their diverse staff begins to gather: Pedro, a Cuban artist; Jackie, a Seattle actress; Ja, a South American youth leader and musician; Rice, a freestyle rapper; Fran, a professional activist and writer. There are many more. Some are junior staff – people in their early 20's, who have participated in the Power of Hope in previous years.

The first day is spent on staff development, getting to know each other, clarifying the week's goals, and sharing what we will be teaching. Some staff members get together to teach a course jointly. I agree to work with Ja and plan a diversity workshop.

The excitement begins to build as the students arrive. A brightly colored tent city blossoms in the lower field with girls on one side, boys on the other. The rules and guidelines are established. The arrival and set-up is done with great energy and enthusiasm and lots of laughter. There is no question that we are here to have fun.

- **A sense of personal safety**

At POH safety issues are addressed immediately and checked on continually. There is encouragement to pushing your limits while you are there at the same time as maintaining your own personal safe space. They explain this in the written guidelines, in the orientation and in numerous exercises.

There are local students from Whidbey Island, most of whom know each other. There is a contingent from Colorado, an inner-city group from Detroit, and a break dance troupe from Seattle. By the time everyone arrives there are 75 students, 15 junior staff and 15 staff members including Charlie and Peggy. In addition, there is a small kitchen staff, some are volunteers and some are AmeriCorp workers.

We are served gourmet dinners by Doug, an exceptional man who directs the kitchen. Doug is an experienced chef and the founder of a not-for-profit food for peace organization. Every summer he volunteers at Power of Hope for two weeks. He has managed to get much of the food supplies donated. He spoke to the whole group one evening as we gathered in a large circle for the dinner blessing. He told of his wish to share this because of his belief that it is important. He explained that he was volunteering because he wanted to be here with us and that he knew the

power of good food to unite people. Here was an expert, busy professional, giving up a week of his time to work for nothing. There was a burst of applause (and the food was GREAT). This leads the way for other invited faculty to speak about their commitment and reasons for participating.

- **Support and guidance from caring adults**

POH gathers together a diverse and talented group of adults who are all there to share with the young people. Most of them are volunteers and many of them return every year. They want to give to and inspire young people. Many of them were experts in their fields. The connections that form with the teenagers sometimes continue after POH.

We gather for an opening circle of jokes, laughter, introductions, rules and expectations, even a skit about recycling. The junior staff with lots of Charlie's input ran this. Peggy was more behind the scenes but she always had her finger on the pulse of the group. Family groups of five to eight are formed and each "family" is given a work schedule for meal clean up.

- **Responsibility**

The participants are all given the responsibility for their safety and the success of the whole group. They rotate in clean up crews for the kitchen. There is also discussion about

each individual's responsibility for his or her experience here and in a larger sense for the well being of the whole world. This was specifically addressed in Peavey's workshop which was about how to becoming a social activist. The continuity of the older youth returning as junior staff built in a continuing sense of responsibility.

The students have all written down an intention for this week on a colorful sheet of paper. They come up to the front one at a time, read their intention and are welcomed by the whole group with a cheer. They then string their paper up on the tree branch, which soon becomes laden with the many intentions of this group. The week is up and running! Anticipation is high.

- **A sense of belonging or membership**

Every community meeting, meal, and evening activity is designed to build this sense of being part of the whole group. There is talk of the privilege and responsibility that goes with participation in the POH. This sense of belonging is formed by the shared meals, by the group rituals and celebrations, and even by the rotating clean-up duty. There were some typical teenage clique issues. These came out in regard to the local teens who all knew each other and the inner city Detroit kids who were part of a break dance troupe and had rehearsal commitments while they were at POH. We saw these separations begin to erode after the evening dance night. The group activities, the family groups, and the atmosphere of joy all helped to build belonging over

separation. It was not always or completely successful, but it was a powerful influence.

Lights out is at midnight but getting these kids to settle down and go to sleep is not so easy. Staff takes turns on rounds through the night. The first night I am awakened at 2 A.M. One young girl is having some kind of seizure. They want me to decide if we need to call 911. I walk through the dark woods into the girl's campsite. The next 2 hours are spent in the girl's tent, on the telephone with her mother, and calming the other girls down. This girl was in therapy for serious sexual abuse in her past. The excitement and nervous anticipation of this week, her first time away from home, precipitated a disassociated break.

The next day the kids are taken on a ropes course. After that we meet every morning as a whole community where various workshops on community action, diversity, and organizing are shared.

- **Structure**

The week is tightly structured almost down to the minute. However there were choices within the structure and daily check-ins prompting changes. At one point the

young people protested that they needed some hangout time and the afternoon classes were canceled in order

Ja and I conduct a one-hour workshop on the issue of differences and diversity. We do two exercises and a song with some discussion and the time is up. We are trying to simply create awareness and open people up just a little. Our theme is the power of hands; they can push away and fight or they can hold and love. After doing a mirroring dance hand-to-hand, we ask the pair to trace each other's hands and then each person writes a personal descriptor on each finger. The room is buzzing as they share these in groups of 4 or 6.

The next day the workshop is about social activism. Fran Peavey is a lifelong, now professional, social activist. She has so much to say. She tells of triumphs and failures, but her message is to do something and to persevere.

- **Access to learning opportunities beyond the classroom**

The days are jam-packed with possibilities. In fact, it is all about opportunities. The difficult part is to decide what you are NOT going to do. The exposure to professional artists offered an expanded glimpse of possibilities.

The rest of each day is spent on workshops. Every session there are four to six different ninety-minute workshops to choose from. The offerings are diverse: acting, dancing, and writing, each from a professional in the field. Storytelling, zine (small magazine or on-line publishing), women's group, men's group, drumming, meditation, and beach yoga are among the many offerings. Some students move from one experience to another, others stay with one and spend the entire week learning a particular craft.

- **Mastery of skills**

There were some very specific skills taught and modeled; dance, art, writing, leadership skills, yoga. Participants were able to practice these, but perhaps even more important they were able to interact with adults who were passionate about their craft.

In the rare free moments, a group of 8 to 10 kids gathered on the lawn, under my window, in a freestyling circle. They go around the circle and one at a time take their turn to step in and hold the imaginary mike. The person in the center begins to rap, creating a 'song' of the moment. The rest of the group keeps the beat as verbal percussionists (they use mouth

sounds rather than instruments). The creativity, the energy, and the talent of this new art form amaze me.

- **A sense of self-worth that is predicated on achievement and character**

The offerings and activities are diverse and draw on a multitude of intelligences. This affords many chances for the participants to shine. Charlie Murphy is especially talented in making everyone feel appreciated. He did this through standing ovations, awards, activities, and lots of laughter.

At lunch time the staff meet to see how things are going. There are many discussions about progress, control issues and even some about our own prejudices. The evenings are each filled with a different event for the whole group: a campfire with songs and stories, improvisational theater games, a dance, a sacred sharing circle, an open mike and lastly a closing ritual. In this moving ritual everyone is invited to take a turn in the center and speak about something in their life that matters. People tell about accomplishments, abuse, fears. There are many tears and a hushed sense of sacred time.

- **Spirituality**

There is a deep sense of reverence at POH. Some of it is there already at Whidbey Institute, a place deeply immersed in Native tradition. The land in this part of the world is beautiful. Blessings are welcomed at mealtime and ceremony is honored. The sanctity of the earth in this spectacularly beautiful setting is often the topic of discussion and the recipient of gratitude. Spirituality is in the music as we all circle the room with our arms raised above our heads singing, "*We will lift each other up, higher and higher...*"

At the dance night the cliques are at first obvious. The inner-city dance troupe from Seattle take center stage and many others are intimidated. Gradually a full circle forms and going around the circle, one at a time, each person sashays into the center to do their own dance and return to their place. Some dance a frenzied whirling, some shy and hesitant, but almost all participate. I felt something change, as we become a real caring community.

Another noteworthy component of the Power of Hope is the family groups. Both staff and students are assigned to an affinity group. As soon as dinner is over the hillside became dotted with little circles of half a dozen people talking and laughing animatedly. Each night we go

around the group and tell our high and our low point of the day. Then we each answer a core reflection question that is given to us on a slip of paper. These groups quickly become bonded and the talk often goes to deep levels of openness. The kids begin to call the staff in their group mommy and daddy or aunt and uncle. There are many jokes and fun around the family theme. This was an effective way to build small cohesive communities within the larger group. It was especially valuable to the shy and quiet ones.

- **Self-awareness**

  Many of the group and class exercises such as improvisational theater games, writing workshops, and the diversity training were designed to build an individual and group self-awareness. This was examined from a personal perspective in the art and writing, from a community perspective in the family groups, and from a cultural perspective in the diversity workshops and gender groups.

The week at Power of Hope was exhausting and inspiring. I think most of us left feeling as if we had been part of a vision of what could be and felt loved. It is a remarkable program.

Conclusion

Though young people generally need these needs to be met for longer than one week, the chance to experience it, even briefly, can be profound.

> We have found impressive evidence that it is possible to intervene in the lives of adolescents who have experienced inadequate, even adverse life changes in childhood to help such youngsters achieve healthy, productive identities and promising futures.
>
> (Ianni, 1989,p228)

They often describe these experiences as having completely changed their lives (Ianni, 1989). These needs, when satisfied go a long way towards giving them "what young people really need on a daily basis: safe places, challenging experiences, and caring people" (Dryfoos, 1998, p5). (see page 7, above). If we remember the attributes of a resilient person described earlier: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose with a belief in the future (National Youth Development, 2000) we begin to see the connection between building resilience and positive youth development programs.

Of course in one week it is not possible to cure all ills and change people's lives, but I think it is possible to open the doors of possibility and plant the seeds of change.

Chapter Four

Meaning making in a Pilot Study: What are the successful components of a Positive Youth Development program model for adolescents as exemplified by the Side By Side Program?

I want young people to identify themselves by means of significant projects. . . . It seems important that the projects are most meaningful when they involve others, when they touch on others' lives. Care may be important; but more important in my life has been the feeling of connectedness in marches or campaigns or deliberate efforts to make something better · to plant, to build, to stop the killing, to cherish the young. There is, as most of us know, a special joy in being part of something in the distance, something that shines and beckons and is not yet.
(Maxine Greene in *Ayers, 1998, p.41-42)*

Introduction

In this chapter I will be writing about a program I have been working with since its inception in 1996. Like other programs responding to the need to approach youth development from an ecological viewpoint, this one takes into consideration the entire sphere of influence on our young people. This view is moving programs away from a deficit model towards a positive youth development model. The program is Side By Side. It offers one example of a short-term, multi-dimensional, positive youth development approach to the needs of adolescents.

The Program

Located at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York, Side By Side is a leadership development program for 17- to 23-year-olds. The multidisciplinary program is designed to create a working community of staff, youth interns, and campers. It is intended to cultivate leadership skills, foster social awareness, and inspire hope in young people. The interns participate in an intensive one-week training seminar that prepares them to then run two, week-long overnight camps for inner-city youngsters aged 8 to 12. The program interacts with metropolitan New York community action groups including the Rheedlen Center, the West Side Community School, the Experiential Learning School of Outward Bound, the Incarcerated Mothers Program, Steps to End Violence, Stand Up Harlem, and the Martin Luther King Center of Spring Valley. Side By Side has conducted staff development workshops for schools and institutions such as Meta

Network, Posse Foundation, Outward Bound, and Service Learning Programs in the New York City Public Schools.

The Mission

The mission of Side By Side is to encourage the development of committed compassionate citizens by accessing and building upon the creativity, passion, and idealism that they believe exist in youth. The aim of Side By Side is not simply educational, rehabilitation, or even service, but transformation. The program's staff hopes to affect behavior, increase knowledge, and enlarge experience as it strives to engender a deep commitment to the common good in the values and hearts of young people who will in turn affect their families, friends, communities, and world.

Sides By Side's goals are:

- To engage young people in meaningful, educational service opportunities.
- To develop resilience and literacy through artistic pursuits, reflection, and service.
- To model communities that foster an understanding of diversity, nonviolent problem solving skills, identity building, citizenship, and agency.
- To support a reverence for the earth and for living beings.
- To develop capacities that may promote a lifetime of moral integrity, community service, and spiritual growth.

Background

Located at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York, Side By Side is a leadership development and service learning program for young people between the ages of 17 and 22. The multidisciplinary program is designed to create a working community of staff, youth interns and campers. It is intended to cultivate leadership skills, foster social awareness, and inspire hope in young people. The interns participate in an

intensive one-week training seminar that prepares them to then run two weeklong overnight Arts and Environment Camps for inner-city youngsters aged 8 to 12. The emphasis is on the use of the arts and reflection as tools of identity and community development. Therefore, the Youth Leaders and the campers keep journals, participate in drama, art, music, storytelling, and dance in addition to gardening, games, and swimming.

Since it's beginning in 1996, Side By Side has served 90 interns between the ages of 17 and 22 and almost 200 children as campers. Thirty-six adult staff have worked with the Youth Leaders in various capacities including mentoring, and the Youth Leaders have each mentored two to four campers.

The Founders

In the early 1990's a group of women began meeting with a desire to find ways in which to reach out into the world in a practical way with their various experiences and wisdoms. Out of this grew The Center for Life Studies at Sunbridge College. The Center for Life Studies offers a variety of public activities in support of individual development and family life. Patti Smith was central in this endeavor. She is the co-editor of the book, ***More Lifeways (*** Smith & Schafer, 1989) a compilation of essays about support and inspiration in family life. I was involved in these early meetings and two of my essays are published in the book. I then participated in planning and presenting at two conferences put on by The Center for Life Studies. Patti Smith and I, both trained Waldorf teachers, began talking about the need for inspiration and service opportunities for youth. In 1996, with a few small grants, we began a new program called Side By Side. It is important to acknowledge the great debt Side By Side owes to Waldorf Education.

Funding

Side By Side has been funded throughout its six years by grants from The Anthroposophical Society, Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Fetzer Institute, Phillip Morris USA, The Foundation for Small Voices, and the Lennox Foundation. It is a not-for- profit organization under the umbrella of Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York.

Participants

Over the past four years, Side By Side interns are males and females between the ages of 17 and 22, with females outnumbering males 4 to 1. Most are in the final year of high school or about to start college. Interns are drawn from all over the United States, with an emphasis on balancing race and class and gender. In addition, there has been one intern from Germany, one from Bolivia, one from Brazil, two with physical handicaps, and a few with mental health challenges such as depression and eating disorders.

The interns usually come from two dramatically different backgrounds. There are students from private schools: well educated, privileged, and usually White. They find out about Side By Side through college connections, word of mouth, or Waldorf school referrals. They pay a small fee to participate in Side By Side. Then there are those from community organizations with which we collaborate. These students, often paid by their organization to train with us, are from the New York or Detroit Metropolitan area. The majority of them are urban, lower-income, African American or Latino students.

The area served by the children's camp program is metropolitan New York. The campers aged 8 to 12, come the first week from the Rheedlen Community Center in New York City and the second week from the Martin Luther King Center in Spring Valley. These

are organizations that Side By Side builds connections with throughout the year with workshops, staff development training, and after school arts programs.

Staff

The staff was comprised of professional artists who wanted to bring their talents and teaching abilities to the children and the adolescent Youth Leaders. Marlena Primavera is the music teacher, Maria Mitchell is the dance teacher, Melania Levitsky is the drama teacher, Karin Schaefer, the director of Side By Side, is the art teacher. I led the training and group work. There were two junior staff members. Rebecca Fishman attended Side By Side in 1997 as a Youth Leader and came back this year as staff. She will be going to Los Angeles next year to start a Side By Side program there. Walter Duncan is a Spanish teacher and after visiting the year before, he returned as a junior staff member. In addition, three garden workers serve as teachers in the garden. There were a number of adults who came for short periods of time as visitors or volunteers. In the first week, there was an invited speaker every evening. These were people who shared their passion and inspired us all. The staff is paid honorariums. Despite the low pay, long hours and hard work, they remain dedicated and return year after year.

The Components

The **Side by Side** program is an integrative model and can be characterized by the following six key components:

1. Creating a multicultural community of care.
2. Experiencing the arts and arts-based literacy development.
3. Exploring identity and diversity through shared life-stories.
4. Developing mentoring connections.
5. Building a reflection and dialogue practice

6. Giving and growing through service learning.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how these components care promote resilience and positive development in youth and will examine the founders' contention that these six components create a program that can enhance meaning making development and serve as an antidote to the violence, depression, hatred, and despair faced by many young people today. The founders of Side by Side believe that a young person is forever changed when she or he experiences the power and joy of making a personal difference through forming a close community that performs a real needed service. When that person is able to reflect on these community-building creative pursuits and approach the work with mindfulness, the changes can be profound and lasting. They propose that in the formative age of late adolescence a dynamic experience, even when brief, can exert a lasting impact.

The Design

Side by Side is a program within a program, since it serves both the interns, the 17 to 21 year old participants, and the campers, ages 8 to 12 years old. The focus of this discussion is on the impact of Side by Side on the interns.

I have chosen to focus on the six key components of Side by Side. I will describe each component, review the research literature for that component, and reflect on each component's relevance to positive youth development. I will then explore the practical application of each component as it is used in Side by Side. Throughout this discussion I will use excerpts from the interns' journals to illustrate and clarify the discussion. These

excerpts are set in italics. In order to protect the privacy of the interns the journal excerpts are identified only by initial and age.

THE KEY COMPONENTS

1. Creating a community of care.

"Developing active learners who pursue meaning involves educating young people to grow and to become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making" (Greene, 1997, p. 379).

What do we mean by community, how is it formed, and why is it important? Trinity College Professor and Center for Educational Leadership Senior Fellow, Thomas Sergiovanni, assures us that, "The need for community is universal. A sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values that make our lives meaningful and significant -- these needs are shared by all of us. Their loss, for whatever reason, requires us to search for substitutes, which are not always functional." (Sergiovanni, 1993, pxii)

This need for community is seen in the theory of French sociologist Emile Durkheim. He claimed that humans have an innate need to belong, to be connected to each other, and to identify with a set of norms that give us direction and meaning. When we are without mores, values, traditions, or goals we are in what he called a state of anomie and we then become alienated (Durkheim, 1982).

Community is defined as a group of people who choose to come together and are connected by shared ideas or values. This connection allows them to transform from a group of individuals or "I's" into a "we". This "we" shares meaningful relationships, a

common place, traditions and beliefs (Sergiovanni, 1993). SideBy Side is an example of a community that is united also by a shared purpose, the children's camp.

Community is ultimately a scaffolding of various relationships. Jean Baker Miller proposed that at adolescence a girl seeks her sense of self as a "being-in-relationship" (Miller, 1976, p. 21). Rather than trying to develop herself as an independent entity through differentiation, separation, and autonomy as generally prescribed for males, the female adolescent is seen as developing her sense of self in increasingly complex ways through relationships with others. It is likely that both individuation and connection are going on simultaneously.

Adolescent girls today construct a sense of identity within the context of their relationships and are influenced by the larger sociocultural system (Lerner, 1995). They need purposeful, safe communities within which to develop this self. Dr. Robert Coles, a Harvard psychiatrist, suggests that the adolescent years in Western cultures are so loosely structured that the individual is left alone with the task of identity construction even though the construction of identity is a relational process (Coles, 1997).

The research of the Developmental Studies Center shows that increases in a sense of community are linked to concern for others, democratic values, altruistic behavior, helping others, and positive behavior (Schaps, 1997). The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, a cross-sectional study of 12,000 adolescents, shows that with greater school connectedness comes lower alcohol and marijuana use and less early sexual behavior and emotional distress. Suicide and violent behavior is also lower (Klein, 1997). These are strong indications about both young people's need to feel connected and the benefits of those connections.

Using service as a community-building tool is a primary way to develop this sense of connectedness. Through these efforts we can attempt to develop active, compassionate citizens (Larson, 2000).

Community Building at Side by Side

A community is normally thought to be a town, or city, or neighborhood, though community can be an active faith group, a school group, an activity assemblage. It is a geography of influence where youth are joined to adults, activities, traditions, and which aim to foster justice, caring, and belonging. It takes a community to ensure a healthy, successful transition of adolescents into adults. When society embraces a shared responsibility and accepts a stake in nurturing the upcoming generation, teenagers will not be viewed as an unpleasant inconvenience (Benson, 1997). The environment can enhance ways to nurture the capacity of its citizens to act on behalf of the common good (Daloz, 1996).

At Side by Side, the first task was to build a community where multicultural understanding, tolerance, and participation were the norm. This seemed to happen best when the community was constructed around a common purpose: shared goals combined with transcendent values. The prevailing intention of Side by Side was and is to run a successful camp for under-served city children.

The campers arrive

Many tools are used to build community. For three weeks the interns live, cook, eat, and work in close proximity. They share bathrooms, personal stories, artistic exercises, and the common goal of running a top-notch camp for the children. During the first week, many tools of community building are employed. They play games, write, give feedback, and share their life stories.

group journal work

There may be no better place to confront the demons that arise in a community than in the kitchen. The kitchen becomes a laboratory of individual and cultural differences. Here the differences bubble up, simmer and smoke, and leave behind a sticky residue. The need for "clean-up" is constant. Consider these example:

> *While K., a white middle-class private school girl from the suburbs wants her food organic, healthy, and on time. S, a Puerto Rican girl from Harlem, is busy frying up plantains with fried cheese on top. K. expects extraordinary standards of cleanliness and punctual schedules at all times. S is not worried. She says, "we can clean more tomorrow." and "dinner will be sometime soon. Chill". Can these two seventeen-year old girls find common ground in the kitchen? This is neither simple nor easy. It helps when the dinner bell rings and their voices are raised in a unified blessing:*
>
> *Love, love, love, love.*
> *The world in one word is love.*
> *Love thy neighbor as thy sister.*
> *Love, love, love.*
>
> Staff Journal entry

> *Community is hard. Period. It is also one of the most glorious, transcendent things I've experienced. It sends liquid chills down my spine when a group of humans share a ritual as we did today. I felt so much love for everyone here.* J, age 21.

As young people strive to know themselves without losing sight of the world, communities of shared purpose, where it is safe to interact and develop with other people, are the place to practice. There is evidence that strong social support is an important component of life change. Social support can increase people's self-efficacy, buffer against high stress, and help cope with high-risk situations. Support groups have become a staple of modern life (Wuthnow, 1994). Shared communities of purpose, whether they are for health or social activism, have the potential to offer this social support. One disadvantage can be that because people tend to associate with like-minded people, social support can also serve to keep us caught in our existing beliefs (Heatherton, 1996).

The ingredients needed to build caring communities include a sense of belonging, member participation, and the content of shared values (Battistich, 1997). These three ingredients seemed to be present at Side by Side.

> *K, it is so strange how someone's life can be so different than your own. I would have hated you if we grew up in the same school. You would have kicked my ass. One day we would click and another day you would get to me. You presented a challenge to me.*
>
> M, 20 yr.

> *As in most communities, there is always someone who does not quite fit with the rest of the group. I don't know why it happened, but we had an odd man out. She was left out of conversations and activities. She tried our patience and interrupted our discussions. Boy could she make us mad. Some of us seemed more tolerant than others. I wonder how alone we made her feel. Why was I so intolerant and two-faced? I am sorry I judged her.*
>
> C, age 19.

> *Side by Side gave me constant pointed practice in community living. Trying to observe the group from an objective standpoint, determining what role I could best fill, finding the best way to let my individual needs and gifts interact with the group's needs and potentialities. I continue to cultivate these skills daily.*
> Z, age 21.

2. Developing creativity in artistic learning.

"Art education is the only field that has the special mission of educating artistic vision. In art education we are concerned with educating human vision so that the world man encounters can be seen as art." (Eisner, 1976). The use of creativity in learning and healing is a widely accepted practice. We can look in the educational, psychological, and even the medical literature to find many examples. Dr. Bernie Siegel (1986), cancer specialist and speaker, never sees patients without asking them to draw a self-portrait. Art therapy, music therapy, and psychodrama (drama therapy) are now offered in many residential psychotherapy treatment centers. Most schools, besides offering art classes,

encourage teachers across disciplines to bring various aspects of creativity into their lesson plans. English and social studies curricula often include an artistic component to enhance the learning experience. In some classrooms, science and math programs are following suit.

Data released from the College Board 1997 Profile of College-Bound Seniors shows that the students who participate in arts education courses score higher on their SAT tests than those who do not. The improvement continues to be more pronounced with increased years of participation (College Board, 1997). In 1995 North Carolina began an experiment in 27 schools to use the arts in order to boost reading and math scores. After the first year the principal reported that attendance was up and behavior problems down. At PS 314 in Brooklyn, New York students attend rehearsals of the Metropolitan Opera House and then create their own opera. Test scores are up and the school has been removed from the state's list of worst schools. (Kantrowitz, 1997)

An individual's "self-knowledge expands as her movement, art, writing, and sound provide clues for further exploration. Using expressive arts becomes a healing process as well as a new language. . . . The expressive arts have helped [people] to go beyond their problems to envisioning themselves taking action in the world constructively" (Rogers, 1993 p. 3). Shaun McNiff, professor of expressive therapy at Lesley College and a pioneer in using the arts therapeutically, views the making of art as a medicine that uses both creation and reflection in its various stages. He describes art as the "articulator of the soul's uncensored purpose." This role can be risky, personal, and intimate, but usually therapeutic for both artists and non-artists (McNiff, 1992, p, 4).

Involving the imagination in the learning process may help to accesses the individual's multiple intelligences and lead to well-rounded, empowered human beings. Believing that we have defined intelligence too narrowly, Harvard developmental psychologist Howard Gardner proposes the existence of at least seven basic intelligences. He suggests that intelligence has more to do with the capacity for solving problems and fashioning products in a context-rich and naturalistic setting. (Gardner, 1983). Dr. Gardner is a proponent of expanding our use and development of all seven intelligences. He posits that this is aided by the use of a wide variety of arts; poetry, drama, music, and drawing, which use the linguistic, spatial, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences.
The arts can expand expressive outlets, build self-esteem, encourage collaboration, empower participants and present authentic cultural voices. It is possible to learn *about* the arts, *with* the arts, or *through* the arts. She prefers the third, more active method (Goldberg, 1997).

Numerous studies have shown that students attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with the arts. The arts develop multiple competencies and reach students who are not otherwise engaged. The arts can encourage higher levels of achievement and can "level the playing field" for youth from disadvantaged circumstances. Arts provide authentic learning that fully engages young people and nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies (Fiske, 1999). All people have the ability to be creative, and according to reliable sources, the process of creating is itself healing (Rogers, 1993, McNiff, 1992). The creative arts can lead us into our emotional realm, into the unconscious, and eventually into self-awareness and understanding. As we journey inward we discover our interrelatedness to the outer world

(Rogers, 1993). This connection to others and to the world itself is crucial to adolescents who often feel isolated and different. The creative experience enables us to attune ourselves to our own inner strengths and knowledge and then to reach out and give back to others (Greene, 1995).

Creative expression may be a direct way to gain access to a teenager's heart and mind. Most youth seem to want to express themselves if given an outlet. With encouragement, permission, and some guidelines a plethora of innovation may result. "Painting, literature, theater, film --- all can open doors and move persons to transform." (Greene, 1997, p18). The expressive arts and crafts can be brought in to the classroom, the therapy office, after-school programs, rites of passage celebration, and volunteer programs. Art is a flowing, continuous, complete experience involving the intellect and the emotion (Dewey, 1963). Lives are made richer and healthier when music and art are present.

Drawing upon the development of new awareness as those doors open, the arts can offer a natural entry into multicultural education. Art can encourage us to shift, imagine, reorient, and develop the ability to see reality from a variety of perspectives, all of which are components of diversity (Nieto, 1992). The artistic exercises in Side by Side often lead into discussions about diversity and then to expanded understandings.

The Use of the Arts at Side by Side.

Artistic work was a daily component of the Side by Side program. Participants, both interns and campers, used a large, blank art journal for drawing and writing exercises. The journal became a personalized expression of the Side by Side experience. Through artistic exercises and the ensuing discussions, new understandings were

nurtured. Side by Side participants filled their journals with thoughts, sketches, collages, photographs, drawings, and poetry. Some examples of their work are used in this paper.

Journal entry: D, 18 yr.

Although artistic technique and art appreciation can be valuable, much of the therapeutic benefit in Side by Side seems to come from actually doing the art. Guided self-expression becomes a powerful agent of change (Cameron, 1992). Painting, sculpture, pottery, printing, and even writing and making music all have potentially therapeutic applications. Artist and writer, Jan Phillips says:

> We are all searching for sustenance. We are all hungry for images, music, films, novels, poems and plays that wrestle with life's complexities, fuel our passions and reawaken our drowsy imaginations. And as we participate in art by making it and by appreciating what others make, we are participating in the process of creating our culture. … As artists of life we can heal ourselves, one another, our planet – one picture, one poem, one song, one act of kindness at a time.
>
> (Phillips, 2000, p. 90-126)

At Side by Side the goal is to develop artists of life; healthy, empowered citizens who participate in the process of creating their world.

Drawing

At Side by Side, portrait drawing was used as an early exercise in getting to know each other. First, the interns drew a portrait of a partner. They were instructed to keep their pencil in constant contact with the page and never look down at it. This "anyone-can-draw" icebreaker

Self-portrait; A, 17 yr.

helped to shake loose the internal critic. Then they each drew a self-portrait. After the work was completed, they took turns holding up their drawings and introducing themselves to the group. Personal information was revealed through the drawing and the sharing.

The interns enjoyed an art exercise called "conversations in color." This is a collaborative activity in which two participants use pastels to draw a picture in silence with no previous

planning. The interns did this in pairs and then later with the campers. This can be a dynamic, interactive experience. The following is a picture and a journal excerpt of this experience.

Journal entry: Conversation in color

The exercise was a conversation in color. We did it without talking. M began right away with the green crayon to outline grass. I added blue and yellow to the lawn while she outlined flowers. She drew a wild sun. I drew a tree while she filled in the sun and sky. M was very proud of our drawing and said she's never gotten along with anyone as well as when we were drawing that picture together. D, 18 years old.

Music

Plato said, "Education in music is most sovereign because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it" (Plato, & Shorey, 1943). Music is thought to build critical thinking ability. There are many aptitudes that can be developed in the music experience; such attributes as group skills, will power, and listening skills. Leonard Bernstein believed that children should receive musical instruction as naturally as food, and it should be as much fun as a ball game (Fiske, 2000).

The interns and the campers sang every day. First thing in the morning, they participated in a music class where they moved, used their bodies to create sound, and played many percussion instruments to work with rhythm. There was also singing before meals, with jumping rope, and in drama. They composed a rap for the play and accompanied the action with instrumentals. By the end of the first week campers were singing the newly learned songs throughout the day.

Drama

Drama can increase participants' self-awareness and enhance their self-expression. It has been shown to strengthen self-esteem, improve interpersonal relationships, enhance coping skills, reduce stress, and stimulate spontaneity (Blatner & Blatner, 1997). Drama is a powerful tool for children's development. Plays create safe situations where children can act out adventure, danger, combat, and decisions. The use of fantasy and symbolism are used to solve problems and speak to deep concerns. Children are given permission to take risks and express hidden feelings. This can give them a sense of control over their own feelings.

Theater can be used to help students develop a heightened awareness of their bodies, voices, and imaginations. They can use these skills to enhance their ability to communicate and to express themselves (Donovan, 2000).

Blatner and Blatner (1997) write that spontaneity requires receptivity to the intuitions, images, and impulses arising from the subconscious. What people develop in time is a sense of being part of a greater mysterious process. Related to this is the sheer sense of vitality and excitement, which arises naturally out of participation in the world of imagery and play. The act of creativity reinforces the healthiest source of self-esteem and makes it easier to forego the development of more narcissistic manipulations. As a result of playfully exploring a wide range of situations in a fail-safe context, young people would be empowered in a healthy way to be open to continuously reviewing and revising their own sets of assumptions. This is what would be the ideal for an educational curriculum aimed at developing the skills needed for dealing with the changes, which are inevitable in the coming years.

Drama has been used therapeutically in psychodrama and Playback Theater. Drama therapy is the intentional use of creative drama toward symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth. Because of its many powerful benefits, drama therapy has been used widely for years in many institutional settings, including schools, hospitals, prisons, and mental health facilities.

Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal developed The Theater of the Oppressed in the 1960's. In an effort to transform the theater from the "monologue" of traditional performance into a "dialogue" between audience and stage, Boal experimented with many kinds of interactive theater. His explorations were based on the assumption that dialogue is the common, healthy dynamic among all people. He believes that human beings desire and are capable of dialogue, and when a dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression results. In his view, theater becomes an extraordinary tool for transforming

monologue into dialogue. He believes that theater allows people to explore human nature and human conflict and in doing this they build relationship (Boal, 1985).

The Side by Side interns, with staff members, created and performed a dramatic production with the campers with only a week to mount a performance. This became an intense, focused, creative experience. The Side by Siders choreographed, rehearsed, and performed. They made the costumes and painted the sets. In 1999, the play was "The Story of Colors", adapted from a Chiapas-Mexican folk tale (Marcos, 1999). In the story, each color was represented by a different creative expression: red was a rap, yellow a poem, green a song, brown an African dance with drumming. The creative community-building power of drama soon became easily visible.

A member of the audience writes about the dramatic presentation:

It was the teamwork that was amazing. Here was a group of kids and teenagers, ranging from small to gangly, looking out for each other and almost visibly praying for each other while they performed a multi-media play.... One boy would potentially always be in trouble and in other people's business; his concentration was very poor, and what in the business they call his 'impulse control' was very limited. So when they cast him in the star role of the macaw bird in the play, who has to 'fly around' on stage and then finally parade his wonderful, splashy plumage, the staff was taking a leap of faith. For all of the rehearsals, the only way he could remember where he was supposed to go on stage was to have a counselor guiding him constantly. He made the rehearsals tough, with his anti-social behavior. But in the performance itself, he struck the audience as completely at home in his part, moving swiftly and unselfconsciously around with no counselor to guide him, as if he'd been a successful macaw for many seasons. (Simon-MacDonald)

Painting the backdrop

Journaling

Diaries, journals, and memoirs have been used to leave a record of their authors' lives since people were first able to write. People use the journal for personal and sometimes professional growth and development.

Journals encourage an inner dialogue between two selves. The first can be described as the walker or active self. This is the one who is always going places and doing things, busy all day. Then there is the watcher or reflective self, the one who goes within, thinks, and feels. By bringing these two together we create a consciousness, a connection, and, hence a sense of wholeness in the self. This can be experienced as a dialogue (Baldwin, 1990). It is by writing that we encourage the connections between the two selves. This dialogue-connection is an important component of the Side by Side program.

Journals can become home to dreams, poems, longings, doubts, and thoughts. Looking back on entries we may glimpse a pattern or gain an insight. The attention to the daily task of writing a life may bring insight, solace, and sometimes, wisdom. By

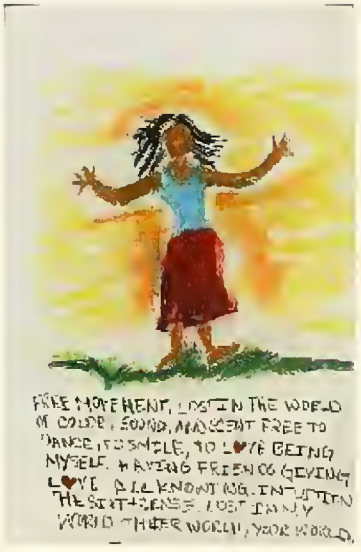
penetrating the passions of today we are able to glimpse the possibility of tomorrow. "[A journal] helps us to see the movement of our life history as a whole, from the vantage point of the present moment. It also helps us to position ourselves between the past and the future so we can support the unfolding of new potentials in our life" (Progoff, 1975).

Writing regularly fosters resilience, a quality that enables people subjected to difficulties to thrive despite them. It signals that we have chosen hope rather than despair; conversely, when we are in despair, if we write we become more hopeful. This is because as we write we become observers, an important aspect of resilience (Werner, 1982). There are healing applications of journal writing. Keeping a journal can be therapeutic. In the process of clarifying and defining feelings, those feelings may begin to change. Journal writing can bring acceptance and closure to difficult and painful experiences. Personal integration is an important aspect of journal keeping. "It brings about therapeutic effects not by striving toward therapy but by providing active techniques that enable an individual to draw upon his inherent resources for becoming a whole person. "[It develops] interior capacities strong enough to be relied upon in meeting the trials of our life" (Progoff, 1975 p.9).

Dr. James Pennebaker, a psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin, found that putting experiences into words is good for your physical health. His research suggests that writing can strengthen the immune system and lower blood pressure. By simply writing about a trauma for fifteen minutes a day for only four days, his subjects' mood and physical health appeared to improve dramatically. They do not have to share their feelings with another person; the writing itself is sufficient (Pennebaker, 1990).

The fear of being alone is a pervasive, controlling fear for many people. But developing the habit of journaling lessens that fear. A journal can become a one-person support group (Wuthnow, 1994).

Educational philosopher Kieran Egan believes that imagination is children's most powerful learning tool. The journal used in partnership with stories can stimulate children's imagination and challenge them when we use journals in partnership with journals (Egan, 1988).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THE SIXTH SENSE) LOST IN MY
WORLD THEIR WORLD, YOUR WORLD.

There are many educational applications of journal writing. Journals can enhance and deepen a lesson. Lesson plans can be built directly around a journal, or a journal can be used to enhance classroom interactions. Journals can also encourage and develop literacy. There are currently many examples of teachers using journals both with the children in the classroom and for research. Some of these are simple and straightforward. Students keep activity journals, daily logs, or literature journals. Other teachers use them in wonderfully creative ways such as sharing the process with an elder of the community or writing as if the student were a soldier in the Civil War (Baldwin, 1991; Cappacchione, 1992).

Use of Journals in Side by Side

During the Side By Side experience, personal journals became the home of daily artistic exercises and written reflections. In addition to guided expressive writing and poetry sessions, participants were encouraged to record their reactions, ideas, fears, and hopes about their participation in the day's events. These reflections were frequently read

aloud in the group. Some people are more comfortable with writing and sharing their words (both written and spoken), but everyone is encouraged to share. The words can became a healing and connecting activity.

> *Being around all these talented companions is having an odd effect on me. They are so aware of so many things. If only I could combine all of their experience, all of their knowledge. And put it into a book. The lives of seventeen teens that cared enough about the world to open their hearts and minds to share a part of themselves in order to improve living conditions and awareness.*
>
> K, age 18.

Collages

Collage, A, age 21.

> *As we drove further from the city, traffic slowed and it was the summertime. The green fields and thick woods. There was a huge tree in the yard and beautiful flower gardens around the house. There was a breeze and the air felt clean. Devoid of exhaust, of smoke and the smell of garbage, of the honking of car horns, and the whine of sirens. There was no shouting or engines revving. There was the sound of birds.* A, age 19.

Side by Side interns were first of all inspired to write creatively in their own journal entries. They spent the first week reflecting on all the activities with journal entries. They were also instructed in ways to use the journals to enhance literacy with the campers that

they were mentoring. The campers worked in their journals every evening with their mentor-intern.

camper's journal: T, age 11.

The arts exerted a strong effect on most participants. Studies have indicated that the arts may develop discipline, cooperation, aspirations, the ability to deal with complexity, and the ability to consider other viewpoints and defer judgment (Fiske, 2000). The use of the arts encourages imagination. Egan believes that the basic tool of education is imagination. "A culture whose inhabitants are afraid to imagine are unlikely to be much good at the creation of literature, at the making of art, at the doing of science, in fact, at doing anything well" (Egan: 1999, p. xii). Side by Side uses the arts to develop the imagination and strengthen capacities in adolescents and children. An observer can see the excitement and joy generated by these activities.

3. Personal Narratives: Exploring identity through the shared life-stories of participants.

Stories define our voice (Gilligan, 1982), deepen our connections (Estes, 1992) and help us to understand our destiny. They connect the outer work of learning to the inward journey of growth in a cohesive, practicable manner. People of all ages respond to stories. The story is basic to our thinking and our understanding (Egan, 1988). Women have a deep need to tell their own stories in order to shape and control their own experiences (Christ, 1986). Stories are designed to entertain, to teach, and to heal (Bruchac, 1996). Teaching with stories uses children's imagination, which is their most powerful and energetic tool (Egan, 1988). When we tell our own story we move into the realm of autobiography, or personal life story. Our biography is our most special possession. By sharing our biography we can build bridges of understanding, develop tolerance for others, and gain insight into our own destiny. Personal biography, when shared in small groups can build community, connection, and understanding (O'Neill, 1996). What can I learn from the patterns of my own life? How can the bad serve a purpose for the good? Who has influenced me? What matters most? These are a few of the deep questions raised by biography-sharing.

> Without stories there is no articulation of experience. Without stories a woman is lost when she comes to make the important decisions of her life. She does not learn to value her struggles, to celebrate her strengths, to comprehend her pain. Without stories she cannot understand herself. Without stories she is alienated from those deeper experiences of self and world that have been called religious or spiritual. She is closed in silence.
>
> (Christ, 1986, p.1)

At Side by Side the interns each tell a story of their life thus far. This is done in a ceremonial manner where a feeling of safety is created. Each person is asked to give some thought to the important moments and people in her own life. Thus begins an introspection of one's own particular path.

Sharing autobiographies can bring insight into personal destiny, a discernment of one's own path, and a sensitivity for the choices and lifestyles of others. Dillard (1996) describes autobiography as an effective tool for multicultural education and for personal growth.

- Creative autobiographies involve a social risk-taking that leads to a sense of empowerment. Our personal story is witnessed and acknowledged by the group.
- Creative autobiographies promote examination of our personal history and culture since we have to explain how are beliefs and decisions came to be.
- Creative autobiographies build understanding relationships and appreciation across differences. By understanding how we were shaped we can move past the traditional stereotypes and generalizations into a shared humanity.
- Creative autobiographies help us to reflect on our experiences and through this to critique and change structures that no longer serve our growth (Dillard, 1996).

Under the category of "Narrative Therapy", psychologists have been examining the impact of stories on healing. This method is guided by the belief that there are four needs for meaning. (1) People interpret experiences relative to purpose. (2) People seek value and justification by seeing their actions as right. (3) People seek a sense of control in their stories, and (4) People seek self-worth by telling stories of their value and goodness (White, 1990).

All four needs are seen during the biography sharing in Side by Side. Because of the formative developmental nature of adolescence, it is extremely significant to youth that their stories are witnessed. This can play a fundamental role in determining our life (Gerrig, 1997). Adolescents need help in becoming more informed about the issues at stake, help in getting clearer about their own attitudes and beliefs, and help in learning to listen to each other so they can talk respectfully with those who think and feel differently (Fine, 1995).

"The sharing of stories in the encounter with the other has tremendous power to lead us into the experience of compassion and trust" (Parks, 1986, p 89). A foundation of trust is needed when a group of diverse young people is brought together and expected to live and work in harmony. The autobiographies begin a foundation of trust that segues into further dialogue.

Every one of us has a story to tell, no two are alike. We have in common the fact that we each have a story that is ours alone. We are our stories and they hold our humanity. We are the accumulation of the stories we tell others and tell ourselves about who we are. Therefore, if we can change our stories we can change our history and change ourselves (Goleman, 1995; Seligman, 1995). Sam Keene, transpersonal psychologist, warns us that, "When we forget our stories, leave our heroes unsung, and ignore the rites that mark our passage from one stage into another, we feel nameless and empty" (Keene, 1973, p 8). When people share their personal stories a place of understanding and compassion may become cleared. Through stories we can make sense of our personal experiences and in turn understand others. We make our stories to maximize our own sense of control and efficacy in our lives (Battistich, 1994).

The Use of Personal Narrative at Side by Side

In the first few days there were many getting to know each other activities. With these the interns began to discover each other's unique qualities.

"Who Am I?: introductory exercise, A, age 18.

At Side by Side a ceremony was created around the sharing of each biography. To stand before a group of virtual strangers and tell your life's story is a significant, though intimidating, task. The interns were asked to take approximately 15 minutes to answer the questions: "Who am I? What are the significant people, places, events, or experiences that have shaped my life?"

An entire afternoon and evening is set aside for the biographies. The room is decorated, the lights dimmed, the list stating the order is posted. One by one each intern and staff member tells his/her story. There are no questions or responses, just listening. After each person is finished (usually 10 –20 minutes) there is a short interlude of flute music played by a participant before the next person begins.

She has been the comedian of the group, keeping everyone laughing with her jokes and pratfalls. Her stand up comedy has the audience convulsed in laughter as she tells about her life. The exclamations in a blend of Spanish and English highlight the adventures she's had, jokes she played, people she's fooled, and scores she settled. What a wild life. Before the laughter fades she is describing a serious accident and how she lay untreated in the hall of an overcrowded, understaffed, uncaring city hospital. She was scared, alone, and scarred for life. As a young teenager, a gang took the place of family in her life. Death was a common occurrence. She names people she cared about who are no longer alive. Wanting to escape she recently found her way to a job at a youth center and that brought her to Side by Side.

We are listening, we are crying.

Staff journal

The interns wrote in the journals about the biography experience:

I really need to hear a few people go first before I do my own speaking. Honestly I'm scared. First off it's just about unavoidable that I'll end up in tears. And my life has never been a happy little house on the prairie.

K, age 17.

Stories have shaped me, shaped this city, shaped history. It's mind boggling all the stories that will never be heard, all that need to be heard to wake people up and make them realize that the images of America on TV don't correlate to the ones out on these streets.

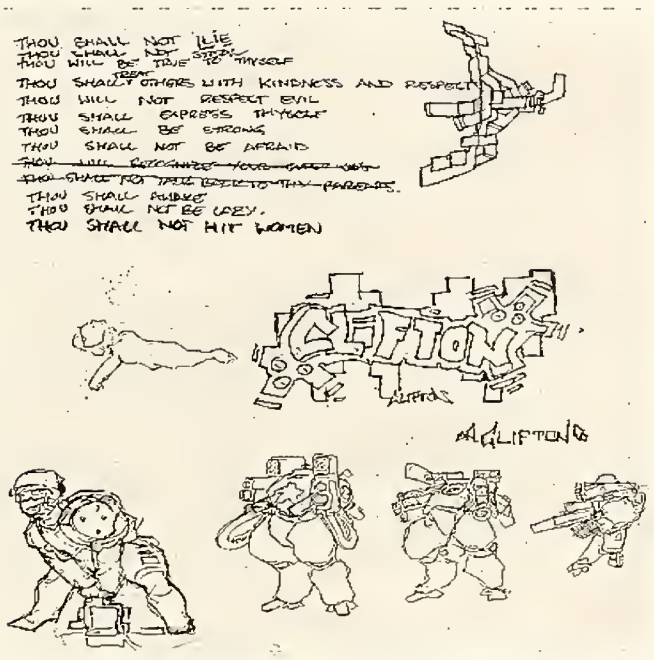
T, age 18.

Hearing people's stories can be difficult in their rawness. When do we censor our stories? Or do they all just come tumbling out like a closet piled high with meaningful junk?

R, age 17.

The research in multicultural education by Banks and Banks shows quite clearly that programs that promote contact and interaction among students of various backgrounds are more effective than programs that just read and lecture about group differences (Nieto, 1996). There were many examples of a broadening of understanding and tolerance from the shared narratives and other activities. They exerted an impact on the interns that created compassion, tolerance and bonding.

One example of this came through an exercise called COMMANDMENTS. Here the interns were asked to write down 'Thou Shalt' and 'Thou Shalt Not' s that were in their families. This led to a lively discussion about whom you were allowed to date, supposed to hate, etc. They were then encouraged to mark the commandments that they wished to preserve and re-write those that no longer served them.


THOU SHALL NOT LIE
THOU SHALL NOT STEAL
THOU WILL BE TRUE TO THYSELF
THOU SHALL TREAT OTHERS WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT
THOU WILL NOT RESPECT EVIL
THOU SHALL EXPRESS THYSELF
THOU SHALL BE STRONG
THOU SHALL NOT BE AFRAID
THOU SHALL NOT BE LAZY.
THOU SHALL NOT HIT WOMEN
AGLIFTON
AGLIFTON

Journal exercise: The Commandments, J, age 17.

My co-counselor and I had almost nothing in common; an example was our reading material. D. was reading The Bible while I was reading Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.
I've lived in Brooklyn all my life, I shop in thrift stores, I like to eat ethnic food, I constantly read for pleasure, I have little interest in clothes, I'm healthy and oh, yes, I'm white. D. grew up in a New Jersey suburb, wears gold jewelry, loves Dominoes pizza, does not read for pleasure, has a passion for clothes, was born with cerebral palsy, walks with crutches and is Puerto Rican. It was very hard to find anything we shared other than our dorm room.
Getting to know D. was a very humbling experience. It was helpful to see in depth, a totally different way of conducting oneself and interacting with others. I was impressed with how objectively she treated others. By observing the way different people react to her, she's become a good judge of character. With everyone with whom I saw her interact, she emanated an unspoken understanding of equality. I

was able to see that her ways were just as valid as mine.

P, age 18

4. Developing mentoring connections between staff, interns and campers.

In Greek mythology, Mentor was the loyal friend of Ulysses into whose care Ulysses entrusted his son Telemachus. Mentoring is an old idea that has received increased attention in recent years. Colin Powell, as chairman of the President's Summit for America's Future, focused the nation's attention on the importance of mentors for youth. Many youth programs are now stressing the need for a mentor for every young person, especially those at risk.

The word *mentor* is defined as a "wise loyal advisor" (*New World Dictionary*). Today the term is used in several ways. Big Brothers and Sisters have used the mentor model since 1902. In their program they match adults to children who meet at least once a week to participate in various shared activities. This relationship can continue for many years.

Businesses use the mentor model both formally and informally, and teachers often take on new recruits as mentors. Mentoring is a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person serves as a role model to guide a less-skilled person. Besides the classic model of mentoring there are also peer-group and informal friends models (Daloz, 1996). Today, a mentor is commonly a caring mature person who forms a one-on-one relationship with someone in need. The mentor listens, guides, counsels, and shares with another, often younger, person who requires assistance, guidance or encouragement (Dondero, 1997).

One study indicated that children who are mentored are less than half as likely to abuse drugs as those who are not. In a *Newsweek* article Jonathan Alter says of mentoring, "Of all the social ideas of the last 30 years, it's the only one that we know works" (Croal, 1998, p. 65).

The Importance of Mentors

Mentors, now widely acknowledged as a source of strength for youth, are found, encouraged, and linked up within a community (Daloz, 1996). Researchers have demonstrated that the presence of a charismatic, caring adult less than an hour a week can exert a marked effect on at-risk young people. (United Way, 1996). Mentoring is an effective way to create intergenerational connections. There are many forms this can take both individually and in groups. They "recognize and support the emerging competence of the young adult, challenging limited notions of possibility, and offer themselves as beacons toward significant purpose." (Daloz, 1996). Current research indicates that having a positive relationship with at least one caring adult is one of the most significant elements in protecting youth from multiple risks (Carnegie Council, 1989; Werner, 1982). In school-age children, mentoring can be particularly important to those at risk. Researchers find that a primary reason given for dropping out of school is the absence of someone who cares, while having someone who knows you and cares is cited as an important factor by street youth who go on to become successful (Dondero, 1997). But mentoring is not just for high-risk youth. It is also a significant factor in those youth who develop strong or exceptional talents (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984) and a determinant of those who become involved in service and work for the common good (Daloz, 1996).

Perhaps we are actually talking about all children. Whether it is a parent, a grandparent, a neighbor or a teacher, all young people need a caring person in their life who sees them as special. Youth researcher, Joy Dryfoos calls it "creative sheparding". "We have strong evidence to support that when children are attached to well-trained and well-supervised mentors their achievement and attendance levels improve." (Dryfoos, 1998, p 201)

The American Youth Policy Forum found, "Effective youth initiatives connect young people with adults who care about them, who serve as role models for them, who advise, mentor, chide, sympathize, encourage and praise" (American Youth Policy Forum, 1997, p. 1X). Connection is a crucial factor of a successful program; it is the way to get young people in and keep them as participants. Mentoring is one practically guaranteed way to forge these necessary bonds (Croal, 1998; Lerner, 1995).

The most important moments in young people's lives may be those times when they are being met personally by the moral and spiritual life of an elder. When asked how an adult can ensure these connections he replies, "the techniques, I argue, matter less than the individual's passion of heart, mind, and soul" (Coles (1999, p. 24).

The Practice of Mentoring

There are wide variations in the attributes and styles of mentors. There is also some common ground. Mentors should be empathic, responsible, and steady. Effective mentors should set high standards, accept differences, and build confidence (Daloz, 1986). They should act as role models and serve to broaden their protégé's experience and goals (Dondero, 1997). The mentor should convey all three aspects of a supportive relationship: material aid (such as tutoring, or furnishing referrals, or actual supplies),

affirmation of confidence in the student's capabilities, and emotional support (Price et al., 1993).

There are many levels of success with mentoring, from the good buddy who pats one on the back to a truly inspiring force in a child's life. Daloz (1986) writes about mentoring as receptivity. By this he means maintaining openness and an ability to combine listening with doing. It is, he says, a relationship.

In past societies with intricate webs of extended families, close communities with a rich selection of role models there was a natural mentorship going on. Godparents, church leaders, relatives, and neighbors watched out for each other's children. Today, with the frequent isolation and fragmentation of our lives, we find it more necessary to introduce children to adults and older youth who can serve in this role (Dondero, 1997).

The Challenges of Mentoring

Mentoring programs and pairings are not automatically successful. There are a number of factors that make the difference in effective mentoring. Limited time and follow-through, social and class differences, lack of program support and follow-through, and lack of evaluation are some of the challenges that face any mentoring program (Dondero, 1997). The impact of short-term interfaces such as speakers or one-time programs are not easy to measure, but can exert considerable influence when inspirational.

Issues of Diversity in Mentoring.

Is it possible to pair racially and culturally different adults and youth in a mentoring relationship? There is little research available on this. It is not ideal. The perfect mentor-youth match would include some shared background so the mentor can

speak the lingo, understand the issues, and assert a strong influence. However, bicultural competence, the capacity to operate with ease in two cultural contexts while retaining a sense of pride in one's origins and identity is empowering (Leadbeater, 1996). It is possible for someone of the dominant culture to be an effective mentor if it is done with great respect and well-informed actions. This can have the advantage of opening up new insights and tolerances.

Because minority students may see criticism as negative stereotyping when it comes from a dominant majority adult, it is essential that they be challenged with high performance standards while at the same time they are being assured of their ability to meet those standards. Over-praising and under-challenging are pitfalls to be avoided (Cohen, et.al., 1999). As Frank del Olmo, the Los Angeles teacher, now columnist made famous by James Escalante in the movie *Stand and Deliver,* said of successful teachers of minority students that they "share one thing in common . . . they truly believe that their students can succeed in school, and they act on that conviction" (Cohen et. al., 1999, p; 316). Mentors must bring this true vision to their work along with a genuine compassion and caring. Then the possibilities become truly exhilarating

The Mentoring Experience at Side by Side

Participants in Side By Side worked and conversed with social activists, community development leaders, philanthropists, psychologists, art therapists, film-makers, poets, and musicians. Each intern then became a mentor for two campers. They do not have the benefits of long-term mentoring relationships during this summer experience but they do create a first-level mentoring. This begins with a shared

experience where the first-level mentor serves as a catalyst in a learning experience, a spark that fires mutual zest for exploring the subject further.

Side By Side mentoring

> *This man knew a lot about the environment, and had me thinking about nature and how we can take care of it. He took me on a nature walk that scared me just a little, and I really thank him for teaching me not to be afraid of the environment. He also taught me that we can discover a lot of different things, such as animals, plants and all types of other things relating to the environment*
>
> J, age 18.

> *You have faith in me. You make me feel so strong and gave me such faith in myself.*
>
> M, age 21.

> *E taught me how early on relationships are formed and how I can become conscious of what I am bringing to it.*
>
> C, age 17.

The mentors, interns and campers attempt to stay in touch throughout the year by postcards and letters. In addition, Side By Side offers workshops during the school year through which the New York area interns reunite with the campers.

5. Developing a Reflection and Mindfulness Practice.

> The limits of thought in any age are set not so much from the outside, by the fullness or poverty of experience that meets the mind, as from within, by the power of conception and the wealth of formulative notions with which the mind meets experience.
>
> (Langor, 1989, p.103)

Reflective dialogue is an important part of learning. It is the process of examining our assumptions or as Webster's International dictionary (1950) tells us, the mental consideration of some subject matter, idea or purpose, often with a view to understanding or accepting it, or seeing it in its right relations." Piaget named his fourth and final stage of intellectual development, formal operational. It begins at about age 12. During this stage adolescents use hypothetical-deductive reasoning with abstract, systematic thinking. Piaget pointed out that formal operational thinking could be seen in changes in behavior. The adolescent could now exhibit the ability to become absorbed in theoretical speculation about universal topics. They could ponder the mysteries of life and offer idealistic assertions (Piaget, 1972).

Vygotsky (1978) uses the model of the zone of proximal development to suggest that intellectual development is based on a social process and the gradual internalization of that social process. The zone is the area between the individual's current level and her potential level. Therefore skills beyond one's level are attained through social interaction and shared activity until the skill is internalized. An experienced learner can share his/her skill with a less experienced one. Higher mental functions are socially formed and culturally transmitted. This enlarges the possibility for intellectual development since

capabilities are then seen as socially facilitated rather than biologically determined (Vygotsky, 1978).

Reflective dialogue can serve as a means for this development. Reflection is a tool for bringing insights to the actions of life. It allows us to make new interpretations that

> enable us to elaborate, further differentiate, and reinforce our long-established frames of reference or to create new meaning schemes. Perhaps even more central to adult learning than elaborating established meaning schemes is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances.
>
> (Merzirow, 1990, p 5)

Service programs alone do not create change as effectively as service combined with guided and shared reflection. "Not only do periods of reflection refresh the nervous systems, but they also allow students to ask questions about themselves, examine their inner lives, and discover their own springs of growth and renewal" (Cousins, 1998, p.57). The Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound staff cite solitude and reflection as the ninth principle of their design. (Cousins, 1998) Time for this is not automatic in today's schools or homes; it must be created consciously. I believe silent reflection is not enough; there must be some teaching and modeling.

One way to define conscience is the ability to make decisions for other-centered values. This is the old parable about walking a mile in the other's shoes. Part of a healthy, active conscience is reflection. It is believed that the process of reflecting and learning mindfulness strengthens conscience (Coles, 1999). Reflection is also generally cited as a necessary component of service learning. It allows the learning experience to become explicit and makes room for change to occur. Harvard psychologist David Kolb believes that learning requires time set aside explicitly for reflecting on experience. He describes a

learning cycle that structures the reflective process into four parts: concrete experience, reflection, applying concepts to experience, evaluation, and reconceptualization (Eyler, 1996). There are many ways to do this. Side by Side used artistic journals, dialogue, and mindfulness.

Mindfulness is an approach to reflection that brings its own benefits as it increases the effect of reflection. Mindfulness is moment to moment awareness. It involves living fully in each present moment, accepting whatever the moment offers whether we like it or not. Its roots are based on Zen Buddhism but it has been integrated under the National Institute of Mental Health's Body-Mind Medicine Program and the field of Psychoneuroimmunology Mindfulness, when practiced regularly, "can make people aware of and ultimately free from, the obsessive and restrictive thought patterns that can destroy their relationships, and work, and lives." (Eagon, 2000). It can transform our relationship with life. Many of us are faced with a fast-paced, constantly changing world; adaptation becomes a necessary skill. Our young people must learn to manage anger and depression, to think and breathe before they act. Mindfulness is practical training for managing change.

Worry is a frequent complaint. When we worry we focus our thoughts and feelings on the past and the future, thinking about what happened or what might happen. Over a period of time, this becomes exhausting and can eventually result in physical symptoms such as headaches, abdominal and gastric distress, heartburn, backache and elevated blood pressure. We experience a diminished sense of control over our life. By learning to be in the present moment Mindfulness practice allows us to become proactive instead of reactive. Brain researcher Dr. Robert Sapolsky emphasizes two points: first,

that experiences beyond our control can shape us, but, second, and more important, we have a mysterious ability to shape our response to experience. After years of studying the connection between various chemicals and stress, he has found that what is important isn't the event that triggers stress, but our body's internal interpretation of that event (Sapolsky, 2002).

This internal interpretation can be changed through mindfulness. If we know a method that teaches how we can control our body's interpretation of stress it makes sense to teach it to our youth. Learning how to live mindfully in the present moment can become a life-long practice. Whether it is used to increase awareness, deepen meditation or prayer, or slow anger that might otherwise become violence, mindfulness is a habit of life that bears cultivation. It is possible to encourage this using a practice of stillness, through silence, controlled breathing, guided meditation, relaxation exercises, and contemplative writing.

Developing Reflection at Side By Side

In addition to the daily reflective journal writing, many moments of silence or focusing on the breath are included throughout the day. They were led through a deep relaxation experience and some guided imagery exercises where they were asked to

visualize a safe place. Dialogue is used to practice listening and speaking from a mindful, centered place.

Side By Side has led me to realize my place in the world. I see myself as one tiny piece of colored glitter in a whole tubful, one terrifically important ant in the community. I want to reach out into the world, soak it up, and let it soak me up. I want to see new things I never thought I'd see; I want to step up to the plate and own my reality as part of a beautifully diverse world.

P, age 18.

6. Working in a Service Learning Practicum.

> Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace. And a soul generated by love.
>
> (King, 1996, p. 4.)

Martin Luther King Jr. knew the importance of service and frequently offered inspirational words in support of service. There are leaders in our communities today who also speak about responsibility, service, and commitment. They ask others to share with them in combining inner development with outer service. They mobilize vision into

action but they do this out of a deep listening and respect. This kind of leadership is called "servant-leadership" (Greenleaf, 1977).

Volunteer service is intrinsic to a democratic society (Bellah, 1985). " Service is the rent we pay for living. It is the very purpose of life, not something you do in your spare time." (Edeleman, 1993, p. 4). Community service develops citizenship skills, enlarges the heart, creates gratitude, and provides challenges. The rapid growth and success stories of Americorp attest to the positive effect of giving back. There is a rapidly growing area of volunteer action-oriented education, often called Service Learning. It can serve as an antidote to self-interest and isolation so often seen in today's youth. (Pipher, 1994; Edelman, 1987). Programs are springing up in colleges and night schools across the country. Service learning is about citizen action, community building, and educating practical visionaries (Billig, 2000, Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Eccles. 1999). Meaning, purpose, and commitment are inseparable.

In a world of conflict and differences it becomes imperative for caring people to develop the capacity to discern the good. This may require action since good must be experienced. Service is an effective way to take action and acquire the capacity to discern the good. It takes students out of the textbooks and places them directly into social life where they can experience practical learning with clear consequences (Nagel, 2001a).

General Colin Powell encourages service as a way to reconnect youth to the community and to increase confidence, self-esteem, and responsibility. Service is a remedy for self-involvement, loneliness, and even depression. Young people are yearning to find deeper meaning in life; often they find this in service (Gergon, 1996). Ernest Boyer, long-time president of the Carnegie Foundation, believed that higher education

must pay more attention to preparing students to be responsible citizens rather than simply scholars and professionals. This is often done through service-learning projects where students are regarded as worker-scholars and learn through real-world experience (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Marriott, 1996).

Recent studies show that students who participate in high school government or community service projects are more likely to vote and become active in their communities. This is true regardless of socioeconomic status, grades, or aptitude. Besides giving them a civic identity, it helps them to believe that they can make difference in the world (Youniss, 1997).

The Teen Outreach Program of St. Louis has shown that service is the most effective way to prevent teen pregnancy. The program changes the girls' perceptions of themselves and gives them a role in their community. These girls had a 40% lower rate of pregnancy than a control group (McDonald, 1997), a rate that is far better than sex-education, contraceptive, or abstinence programs.

In Rosewood High in Bellflower, California, the students on probation now spend two hours a day helping at Pace Elementary School where the children have major mental or physical disabilities. One high school student now says, "I want to make a difference -- finish school then get a job. I want a clean record" (Madigan, 1996 p. 26-27). The research seems to indicate that strengthening bonds to society may deter delinquency. Peer level of involvement in service was inversely related to marijuana use (Younnis, 1997).

In a study of over 1000 students at 16 sites of Teen Outreach Program, it was found that a successful intervention to prevent adolescent problems was related to

promoting a sense of autonomy and relatedness, and to the self-reliance, challenge, and satisfaction of successful volunteer experience. (Allen, et. al., 1994). Adolescents who participated in prosocial behavior, defined as church and volunteer activities, had the most consistently high outcomes of high academic achievement and low rates of involvement in risky behavior (Eccles, 1999).

> When service learning meets an authentic community need and includes meaningful planning, service, reflection, and celebration, it typically succeeds in engaging students in the learning task. Most studies attribute this outcome to the nature of service learning as an activity that students perceive to be relevant, interesting, meaningful, and fun
> (Billig, 2000, p. 662)

Journal entry; conversation in color

Side by Side as a Service Learning Model

Side By Side is one model of community service learning. The interns are at a crucial age in their development. It is important to impact young people before they turn 23 if we want them to be committed to the common good for life (Daloz, 1996). SideBy Side seems to have some success at this.

Interns wrote the following about their work with the children:

Side by Side has influenced my direction in working with inner city youth. It gave me skills in understanding and patience, which I have used over and over again. It has greatly influenced my attitude towards race relations · It was the spark that ignited a flame of desire to truly understand and embrace difference.

R, age 19

Side by Side was absolutely important in my goals and career plans. I think I was headed toward a life of community work but the program kicked my thinking and doing up to a new level in a short period of time. I now tutor inner-city kids and teach dance in a woman'' prison and I hope to start a school in the future.

D, age 20.

When those kids smile, they radiate light and I'm just filled with love for these children, and I want to help them have fun and keep that radiant light about them.

C, age 18.

The students felt capable, needed, and important in the process of doing significant service work. It is a simple formula . . . if the work is real (and not created to give them something to keep them busy), is organized well, and there is reflection built into the process, then the result is often growth and satisfaction.

Conclusions

Is there significant, lasting change as a result of participation in the Side By Side summer intensive? It is difficult to measure change in a three-week period. It may be the seed of change that has been planted. However, there was some evidence from the participants that the Side By Side experience had a lasting impact on them. The following comments came from the self-evaluations facilitated in a group format on the final day and from a follow-up questionnaire.

As I grow, I put up walls. I feel I was doing it with the kids and that if I had pushed them and myself more, it would have been better. The kids were a real opportunity to come out of myself and to grow, the connections were something I could see happening, it was as though I was watching it from out of myself.

I came here with an open mind. The first week was fun, but this week I feel like I didn't do much. I felt separated from everything and everyone. I think I did that because this is hard for me. I feel comfortable here, I feel like this is my family, but I put up boundaries this week because I didn't want to get too close to you guys.

A, age 20.

I can honestly say that the most powerful part of my Side by Side experience, was the development of community among the counselors. We were all from drastically different backgrounds, and able to offer and receive different things. A beautiful community developed between us, but it was not entirely smooth sailing. I think all of us experienced an unexpected culture shock; this cultural exchange which provided us with a wealth of power, community, inquiry, and love with which to approach the children. Nonetheless, I was forced to face my own prejudice, ignorance, and privilege in a way I'd never expected.

K, age 18

The journal and reflection activities may have helped to reduce stress and improve the rate of personal change in this program. Most of the interns felt strongly impacted by the program. They cited courage, patience, focus, and listening as areas of growth. There were many comments about differences and understanding. A number of people mentioned clarity about what is important in life: values such as making a difference.

A few on-going ripples.

The concluding exercise at Side By Side is a self and group evaluation. Sitting in a circle each intern tells what his/her intention for the weeks at Spring Valley was, how he/she did fulfilling the intention, and how the intention may have changed. After each person speaks, everyone in the circle adds a few words about how they saw that person. There is some evidence that the interns' view of others and the world have been altered by their participation in the program. Some comments from the verbal evaluations:

- *I appreciated your perspectives even though I disagreed.*
- *This is the single most notable experience of my life. I would never have met many of you.*
- *I wish I had known more people like her cuz I would have done better in school, set more goals. I believe he changed me in the way I viewed certain things; what I could be, should be, looking for in the future.*

Follow up questionnaires show that many of the participants continue to do service when they return to their homes and communities.

- D., after participating in the Side by Side summer 1997 program, volunteered at a Juvenile Girl's Detention Center in Rhode Island where she facilitated a journaling workshop based on the Side By Side model.
- M., after summer 1998 in Side By Side, worked in a Harlem youth center, participated in leadership courses such as Peacemakers, and now wants to return to Side by Side as a junior staff member.
- A. came back to Side by Side every year for 4 years, first as an intern and lastly as an assistant. After working on campus in service programs, she

will now do a six-month placement as an intern to work with handicapped youth.

Follow-up letters:

Journaling was one of the best parts of the program for me. I discovered a love of writing that must have been lying latent somewhere. Ever since that summer I have kept journals combining art and writing, inspired by the work we did in Side by Side, and I value the work that has come out of them immensely. Expressing myself that way has guided my introspective nature into more positive, creative channels.

R, age 23.

One of the most lasting things Side by Side gave me was a commitment to and passion for service work. I have been volunteering ever since. Without a doubt, I give Side by Side the credit for making me aware of the possibilities within service and the possibilities I have within me for doing creative, meaningful work in my life.

D, age 22.

It's still hard to try and convey how Side by Side changed me. I know that I came out of that summer with an entirely new perspective on the world and on myself, which was something that I personally needed very badly.

It was such a relief to interact with people who had such different experiences than myself, who had led lives I could never have imagined. I found out that I could thrive in the most disparate environments as long as I kept myself open and willing to learn. It made me so happy being useful, finding out that I could in fact BE useful and change things instead of passively going through life as an observer.

C, age 23.

In Closing

In this paper I have examined one program directed toward Positive Youth Development from the perspective of Side By Side, a summer Service Learning Program for 17 to 22 year olds. Within this program I selected six components to examine. These were: creating a multicultural community of care, experiencing the arts and arts-based literacy development, exploring identity and diversity through

shared life stories, developing mentoring connections, building a practice of reflection and dialogue, and growing and learning through service. Through these six components I have looked at the impact on youth development, resilience, and change. There are many ways to achieve these same goals with youth, but in comprehending these particular components we may gain some insight into future program formation and impact of a Positive Youth Development focus.

Chapter Five

The Study

> *Each of us has the possibility of being a composer, to compose the climate in which one lives. To indeed compose the neighborhood; to compose the melody of life. To compose the richness of it. To decide: I will have a climate in which all men and women must be treated equal. I will compose that.*
>
> (Maya Angelou, Commencement address 2000)

The Research

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to describe the experience of seven young women Youth Leaders, who participated in Side By Side during the summer of 2001. I am examining their experience in terms of meaning making development in their lives. Side By Side is a youth leadership development program designed to broaden the participants' view of the world and their place in it, by building a community of diverse individuals where members honor their differences and connections while they work together to run a summer camp.

The secondary purpose of this study is twofold: first to effect the improvement of one specific program, Side By Side, as it expands its programs and develops funding sources, and second, to determine the parameters from which to guide and enliven positive youth development programs throughout the country.

After describing the components of the program that I used as data sources, I will introduce each Youth Leader with a descriptive case study. I then develop a cross-case

analysis in order to look at the differences and similarities of the participants' experiences and finally I attempt to draw some conclusions as to the relevance of this research for Side By Side and youth programs in general and its implications for my personal work.

2. Why Qualitative Research?

I chose a qualitative case study because I wish to describe the program with the same holistic, integrative approach I bring to all my work and life (Patton, 1996). As a program director, therapist, and teacher, I am interested in evaluating the effects of an intensive, short-term, Positive Youth Development program on the identity development and meaning making development of adolescent girls. A qualitative case study will allow me to examine this program in depth through the actual voices of the girls. I will look at how Side By Side affects the participants. I will use a grounded theory approach, the process of generating theory through discovery, wherein I will attempt to learn from the participants rather than simply study them (Glesne, 1999).

I used qualitative research as a way to:

> understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To make their interpretations, qualitative researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. Their study design, therefore, generally focuses on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites. ... Qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the setting or lives of others, and they use multiple means to gather data.
>
> (Glesne, 1999, pp. 6-7)

Qualitative research through interviews is about telling others' stories and "telling stories are essentially a meaning making process" (Seidman, 1991, p1.) By using information from observations and interviews to re-create scenes and tell stories in the girls' own words I hope to enrich ways to explain the worlds we study, interpret, and

create. In addition, writing in a way which presents a full picture of a young woman's situation in the context of her peers and activities encourages the reader to acknowledge both her complexity and her humanity.

Because I believe deeply in a youth-centered approach, I wanted the girls' own voices to speak for themselves. For this reason I chose to do a case study approach wherein I created a picture of each of the seven girls using their interview words and their journal entries. Since I believe that, for the most part, youth construct their own culture, I utilized an approach that allows me to directly access their beliefs and assumptions.

3. The Research Focus and Justification

Toward a Youth-centered perspective

The goal of this research is to examine the foundations of a positive youth centered approach to program participation. Though Side By Side is co-ed, due to my considerable familiarity with the issues of girls and young woman, I chose to focus on the experience of the female youth leaders. I wanted the girls' voices to speak for themselves. In working with young women I believe it is important to encourage them to develop and strengthen their own voice as a tool of identity development. I wanted the voices of these young women, through their written and spoken words and their art, to be the focus. This is in contrast to a more pathological approach to girl's problems and disabilities. The latter approach has contributed much to the issues of challenge facing adolescent girls today; however I believe that it has often narrowly constructed these views from the viewpoint of deviance or deficiency to the exclusion of strength and resilience (Males,1996; Scales, 1991). Until recently, girls' authentic voices have been mostly missing from the research. Today, this is changing (Jordan, et al, 1991; Gilligan et al.

1991; McWhirter, 1998). It is within these actual words that I look for the girls' insights and views.

If the pathological approach to adolescent girls yields a constricted view of them, a qualitative case study offers a more personal, broader view. We can see some changes in the simple examination of our vocabulary of concepts: from risk to resilience; from youth as deficits to youth as resources; from problem, dysfunction, and disability, to potential, performance, and possibility. These changes in the vocabulary alter our underlying assumptions about young women and move us closer to a youth-centered approach to adolescent girls and program development.

Adolescence is considered to be a socially constructed category somewhere between the elusive boundaries of childhood and the more rigid definitions of adulthood (James, 1986). This categorization is determined by historical timeframe, social and physical location, cultural discourse, economy, politics, and law. The contextuality of youth is also determined by youth peer culture. This culture is a mix of shared activities, values, and concerns that are from local interactions but may be tied into regional, national, and even global actions. With the increasing power of media, the national impact has become more uniform. Although the beginning of adolescence is usually marked by puberty, the end is less clearly defined. Some experts and organizations such as the World Health Organizations have marked the end of adolescence as extending to the age of 24 (Scales, 1991). I would agree that a developmental change becomes apparent around age 23 or 24. The popular opinion is to view adolescence as two distinct periods: early adolescence (11-15) and late adolescence (16 - 22) (Dryfoos, 1998, Scales, 1991). In this study I will primarily look at the latter stage of adolescence.

Throughout this work, I strive to treat the young people's experiences and words contextually. I do this by trying to move beyond stereotype and categories to hear the participants directly and explore the diversity of their experiences. I begin by assuming that youth actively construct not only their identities, but also their particular culture, rather than simply absorbing the school, television, or parental culture that surrounds them. This identity construction is a continual process of give and take with the world around them (Kroger, 1989, Parks, 1986). Their identities are situated in everyday practices and intentions. Therefore we can look to their conversations and writings for examples and insights. I have used methodological approaches that allow self-representation by the young women and let me directly access some of their beliefs and concerns. Scholars tell us that youth spend a great deal of time out of school and it is here that they strive to make sense of the world and their place in it. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Yet only a few studies look at how meaning is constructed outside of a school environment. This study allows us to view an out of school culture as it is being actively constructed.

Sociological perspectives

Many studies of youth programs look at results of specific prevention type interventions and their impact on delinquency, substance abuse, violence, and pregnancy. It is only in the last decade that we are seeing these problems as arising from multiple pathways of influence and having a common cause (Burt et al 1998). This view has come out of a growing body of empirical evidence and the acceptance of ecological theories proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Researchers are beginning to document the

influence of family, peers, schools, cultural and ethnic influences, and community on the individual's development, (Dryfoos, 1998, Lerner 1995).

The earlier studies often gave little attention to young people's experience, concerns, or voices. They did not approach the meaning and importance young people place on specific actions or people. They did not ask what matters in their lives. Narrative analysis accesses the ways in which people constitute memory through their stories about lived experiences. Narratives act as frames that are generated interactively to make sense of and organize phenomenon (Goffman, 1974).

In the following case studies, I pieced together the narratives from the participants' own told stories, written journals, and interviews to form a brief portrait of each girl. Using the participants' own voices in tandem with narrative analysis, I will employ an ecological systems perspective which looks at the whole environment to examine each young women's experience at Side By Side.

4. The Research Questions

- How do seven young women youth leaders in Side By Side view their summer experience in the program?
- How does this experience have an impact on their identity development?
- How does it help them to build a sense of purpose, of meaning making in life?
- What components of the program affect these participants and why?
- How do race, class, ethnicity, and age impact the experience and if so, in what way?

Methodological Framework

For in depth program description see chapter 4.

1. The Context: Side By Side

In 1996, with a few small grants, Patti Smith and I began a new program called Side By Side. It is important to acknowledge the great debt and connection Side By Side has with Waldorf education. Many of the arts and philosophical approaches of the program are derived from Waldorf education.

Located at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York, Side by Side is a leadership development and service learning program for young people between the ages of 17 and 22. The multidisciplinary program is designed to create a working community of staff, youth interns and campers. It is intended to cultivate leadership skills, foster social awareness, and inspire hope in young people. The interns participate in an intensive one-week training seminar that prepares them to then run two weeklong overnight Arts and Environment Camps for inner-city youngsters aged 8 to 12. The emphasis is on the use of the arts and reflection as tools of identity and community development. Therefore, the Youth Leaders and the campers keep journals, participate in drama, art, music, storytelling, and dance in addition to gardening, games, and swimming.

2. The Participants

Over the past four years, Side By Side interns are males and females between the ages of 17 and 22, with females outnumbering males 4 to 1. Most are in the final year of high school or about to start college. Interns are drawn from all over the United States, with an emphasis on balancing city and rural, many ethnicities, privileged and low

income people. In addition, there has been one intern from Germany, one from Bolivia, one from Brazil, two with physical handicaps, and a few with mental health challenges such as depression and eating disorders.

The interns usually come from two dramatically different backgrounds. There are students from private schools: well educated, privileged, and usually Caucasian. They find out about Side By Side through college connections, word of mouth, or Waldorf school referrals. They pay a small fee to participate in Side By Side. Then there are those from community organizations with which we collaborate. These students, often paid by their organization to train with us, are from the New York or Detroit Metropolitan area. The majority of them are urban, lower-income, African American or Latino students.

The area served by the children's camp program is metropolitan New York. The campers aged 8 to 12, come the first week from the Rheedlen Community Center in New York City and the second week from the Martin Luther King Center in Spring Valley. These are organizations that Side By Side builds connections with throughout the year with workshops, staff development training, and after school arts programs.

3. Staff

The staff is comprised of professional artists who bring their talents and teaching abilities to the children and the adolescent Youth Leaders. Marlena Primavera is the music teacher, Maria Mitchell is the dance teacher, Melania Levitsky is the drama teacher, Karin Schaefer, the director of Side By Side, is the art teacher. I led the training and group work. There were two junior staff members. Rebecca Fishman attended Side By Side in 1997 as a Youth Leader and came back this year as staff. She will be going to Los Angeles next year to start a Side By Side program there. Walter Duncan is a Spanish

teacher and after visiting the year before, he returned as a junior staff member. In addition, three garden workers serve as teachers in the garden. There were a number of adults who came for short periods of time as visitors or volunteers. In the first week, there was an invited speaker every evening. These were people who shared their passion and inspired us all. The staff members are paid an honorarium. Despite the low pay, long hours, and hard work, they remain dedicated and return year after year.

4. Research Design

The purpose of this study is to express the views of seven young female participants in Side By Side. A qualitative method of inquiry is most suitable as a means to elicit these young woman's own experience. I chose qualitative research as a way to:

> understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To make their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. Their study designs, therefore, generally focus on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites.
> (Glesne, 1999, p6-7)

I use the parameters of qualitative research as stated by researcher Michael Patton to frame my study (Patton, 1990).

- My study is naturalistic inquiry examining a real situation. I am trying to allow the participants to describe their own experience of a summer leadership program
- The categories and analysis emerge from the girls' own interviews and writings.

- Since no single participant has the definitive view of what the affect of the program is, integrating multiple perspectives becomes an aim of the research. (Weiss, 1994)
- I will be a participant researcher or active participant: one who has a job to do within the research setting in addition to the research (Ely, 1991).
- I aim for holistic descriptions as a way to more thoroughly understand the individual participants and as a way to see the working of the system (Weiss, 1994).
- The questions attempt to remain open-ended and receptive.

Because I believe deeply in a youth-centered approach, I wanted the girls to speak for themselves. For this reason I chose to do a case study approach wherein I created a portrait of each of the seven girls using their interview words and their journal entries.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- Multiple sources of evidence are used

(Yin, 1984)

Narrative analysis accesses the way in which people constitute memory through their stories about lived experience. "As a research technique, the study of experience is through stories. Emphasis is on the stories people tell." (Merriam, 1998, p 157) As much as possible, I used the participants' own narratives. By using information from observations and interviews to re-create scenes and tell stories in the girls' own words I

hope to enrich the ways in which we explain their world. In addition, presenting a picture of each young woman's situation in the context of her peers and her activities encourages the reader to acknowledge both her complexity and her humanity. Researcher Carolyn Ellis explains her use of narrative by writing,

> I want to reframe the narrative voice in ways that open up social science discourse to a larger and more varied audience, that make social science more useful, that allow for the silenced voices of others and the silenced parts of ourselves to speak themselves.
>
> (Berman, 1997, p. 134)

By providing recognizable descriptions of the difficulties adolescent girls face in forming a confident identity and the ways they create meaning in their lives, this work aims not only to inform scholars, but also to motivate educators, parents, and social service professionals to support change. This is a form of heuristic inquiry with its emphasis on human experience.

> Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. They can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known.
>
> (Merriam, 1998 p. 30)

This form of research is concerned with: meanings, not measurements; essences, not appearances; quality, not quantity; and experience not behavior. It emphasizes connectedness and relationship, looks for essential meaning and calls on a creative synthesis wherein the research participants remain as whole persons. (Patton, 2002). This emphasis fits well with my approach.

5. Data collection

Four Methods of data informed the study

Background data on the context of Side By Side from my personal observations of the

girls in the program. These were made over the three weeks from my position as a participant observer.

1. Three interviews conducted with each girl about their background, feelings and reactions to the program. These interviews were completed on the first or second day of the program, at the very end of the program, and in January or February as six month follow up.
2. Tape recordings of the shared biographical narratives and the group training sessions.
3. The Youth Leaders' writing and art, used with permission, from the journals that they kept throughout the program.

While the focus of the research was on the seven girls and their own experience rather than on the Side By Side program, findings of the program itself are sometimes included when they illuminate the girls' experience. In the cross-case analysis the girls' experiences are used to understand the broader affect of a Positive Youth Development Program. It cannot be overlooked that Side By Side is a co-ed program. The young men are a significant part of the program and the interaction between the male and female Youth Leaders is one aspect of the diversity that is a foundation stone of the program. Though I am focusing on the female Youth Leaders, the male Youth Leaders, not surprisingly, often enter into the picture. In this particular year's program there are five male Youth Leaders of color and one white male.

The Interviews

> At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.
> (Seidman, 1991, p3)

The foundation of the data and research was formed by the interviews conducted with each participant. These consisted of a series of three interviews.

Interview I. – Conducted on the first day of the summer program.

Participants will be asked to tell about their lives, their family background and their intentions and expectations for the program. This interview is conducted on the first day of Side By Side.

"How did you come to participate in Side by Side?"
" What do you anticipate, worry about, want from these weeks?"

Interview II – Conducted on the final day of the summer program.

Participants are asked what they did, what was effective or not effective, and why. They were asked to give details and specific descriptions of incidents or interactions.

"What did you actually do during these weeks?"
"What was your relationship to the campers, the other participants, and the staff?"
"What did you like or not like?"
" What would you change about your actions?"

Interview III. – Conducted by phone five or six months after the program ended.

Participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience. Have the three weeks at Side by Side impacted their lives, and if so, how?

"How do you understand the experience of Side By Side?"
"What does it mean to you?"
" How has it impacted your future?"

With these questions I intended to come out with enough authentic material to create a profile of each participant.

> A profile in the words of the participant is the research product that I think is most consistent with the process of interviewing. We interview in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories. We learn from hearing and studying what the participants say. Although the interviewer can never be absent from the process, by crafting a profile in the participant's own words the interviewer allows those words to reflect the person's consciousness.
>
> (Seidman, 1991, p. 91)

6. Data Analysis

The first person accounts of experience form the narrative analysis basis of my research. Qualitative data analysis is usually a circuitous process. The progress goes forward and then loops back and slowly starts forward once again. This process started with my initial pilot study of Side By Side. At that time my categories had to do with the components of Side By Side and what these components were teaching the participants. In this study I am looking at the participants without the separation of the components blocking my vision.

- My first step in the analysis of interview transcripts was to read and re-read the raw data in addition to listening to the tapes again.
- After that I began to mark the passages that held interest and seemed important. I read every sentence or section and wrote a word for the content such as friends, problems, parents, worries.
- At this point I returned to the first two steps and compared them with the categories. I was then able to begin to code the words by categories. These

categories underwent some further metamorphosis, as they became the themes of my research.

- I selected direct quotes to support or illustrate each category for each girl.
- I began to collate and integrate the findings for each participant
- I then compared the seven case studies for patterns, common themes, and differences.

> It is important that the researcher acknowledge that in this stage of the process he or she is exercising judgment about what is significant in the transcript. In reducing the transcript the interviewer has begun to interpret and make meaning of it.
>
> (Seidman, 1991, p. 90)

I tried to stay true to the words of each girl though I also allowed myself some room for observation since I had worked closely with the participants during the entire program. In case study analysis there is no fixed formula for how to proceed or what to measure. Much depends on the researchers own thinking, her choice of what to focus on and sufficient demonstration of evidence. It is also crucial to consider any alternative implications of the findings (Yin, 1994).

7. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations must always be taken into account with human populations, but with children and adolescents this need becomes even more crucial. As a research population adolescents are vulnerable. I have found when working with multicultural groups of adolescents it is especially important to consider the ethical implications for each action. The participants will not be exposed to physical, psychological, social, economic or legal risk (Sieber, 1992). This project is therefore a low risk research design but ethical implications remain. It is crucial to maintain

"individual rights to dignity, privacy, and confidentiality" (Glesne, 1999). My responsibility is to those I am working with and studying. I am especially aware of this responsibility when sensitive subjects come up in the process of the interview (Sieber, 1992). Interviews are interventions. They affect people (Patton, 1990). Patton offers some guidelines for conducting interviews such as confidentiality, risk assessment, informed consent. Though my participants were all over 17 and most were over 18, I was conscious of their position of unequal power. None refused to participate, but I sometimes wondered if they felt they could say no.

Upon beginning the program, the girls were informed of the research and asked if they would be willing to participate. They were then asked to sign a release and a consent form.

I was also aware of the possibility of a blurred boundary between therapy and interviews. Some of the young women were dealing with difficult issues in their lives and the intensity of the program can bring a lot of emotions to the surface. There were times I did not feel I could simply act as an impartial interviewer but was needed more as a mentor and even therapist. My experience as a psychotherapist was useful when dealing with risky personal issues and the need for referrals.

In conducting this research my intention was to honor the research guidelines from The National Council for Research on Women.

- Focus on girl's strengths, progress, and resilience; emphasize how girls understand and actively strategize to deal with both positive and negative aspects of their lives.
- Work collaboratively with girls.
- Focus on girls within the contexts of their lives.
- Speak to the complexities of girls' social and personal identities, probing the interplay of racial, cultural, social class, gender, and sexual identification, ads well as social contexts and personal experiences.

- Investigate the impact of social policy and programs. What is supportive of girls' needs? Explore the ways girls are involved in supporting and transforming their world.

(Phillips, 1998, p 93-94)

8. Challenges and Assumptions

As a participant researcher, my attention was often pulled in mutually exclusive directions. I wished to remain objective with the clarity of an astute observer -- watching, taking notes, and recording events without any responsibility for their unfolding. This wish was often in sharp conflict with my demands as workshop director, counselor, and program manager when I needed to facilitate workshops, conduct mentoring sessions, be aware of each Youth Leader's well being, and generally move things along.

An additional influence was the fact that the girls were well aware that the person asking the questions was the same person who runs the program and has a wish to see it continue and succeed. They may have been influenced by a desire to be helpful and to please the researcher and thus avoid anger issues, conflicts, and criticisms.

It is not an easy task to build a profile on the collected data. My interviews, on hindsight seemed to fall short. I accepted too many statements without probing. I often did not get close enough to the true feelings or the conflict. However I was partially saved by the variety of my data sources. I did, after all, have the participants' journals to add dimension.

The challenge of racial and cultural differences is one that must be recognized and acknowledged. My Side By Side colleagues and I are constantly examining our attitudes and methods for signs of racial bias. There is no way to avoid this issue. Questions arise in our menu choices (fried plantains vs. steamed vegetables), in our chosen activities

(basketball vs. gardening), and in our journaling curriculum that is derived from a Waldorf school method with traditional European origins. When I first began this work, I was unsure if I personally had anything to offer girls of color. I am undeniably white, middle class, and from a rural area besides. I am not very hip or charismatic or specifically talented… so what made me think I could get their attention, let alone move them towards growth? I found that if I paid attention to them and stayed honest, I could offer my wisdom and insights and facilitate a program that could produce growth.

It seemed many of the white, so-called privileged kids that I worked with had everything. They were on the college track with promising career opportunities practically assured. Their talents were being developed and encouraged by parents, teachers, and multiple opportunities. Yet I was finding an emptiness, a non-specific longing, and a lack of meaning or purpose in their lives. These differences were both a challenge and a gift to the research process. Could one program, Side By Side offer something to both populations?

I was also aware of the privileges I have been afforded due to my race and socio-economic status. Here I was using these young women for the purpose of gathering data for advancement toward a Ph.D.—itself a perceived symbol of privilege. I could only insure that they were not harmed and at best, even helped, by my research project.

These challenges being taken into account, there was a certain beauty to this research project. The participants were open, self-disclosing, and enthusiastic. This openness was encouraged from the very first day until the last by all the exercises and discussions. I found the young women to be empathetic and cooperative. In registering for Side By Side they had already self-selected to be part of a service program thereby demonstrating a

desire to help. The journaling curriculum around which Side by Side rotates, lent itself very naturally as a research tool. It provided data that fit with my goal of hearing the girls' actual voices.

9. Validity: Internal and external

Internal validity asks how accurately the research findings capture what is really there. "It is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic view of what is happening" (Merriam, 2000, p203). In order to enhance internal validity I used the following methods:

1. Triangulation – by using multiple forms of data such as interviews, journals, group transcripts.
2. Member checks – returning to the participants to check the data with them
3. Peer examination – asking my colleagues for feedback
4. Participatory research – I asked the participants to be a part of the program, which was directly involved in the research.
5. Researcher's bias- I attempt throughout to point out my bias and assumptions.

(Merriam, 2000, p205)

External Validity is concerned with how well the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. I used what Stake calls "naturalistic generalization" wherein unstated knowledge, intuition, and personal experience is used to draw conclusions in a more general direction.

I believe that the combination of these particular research methods. Address the issues of and the needs of the study and the population this work will one day serve.

Case Studies

1. Emily

Self Portrait

It is hard to find Emily in her Self-portrait. There is no face or body but rather representations of Emily and her many interests and talents.

These I have Loved

The click of my nails on my piano keys
The ring of perfectly in tune
Fingers running across the neck of
My delicate yet earthmoving viola.
The silence after a piece well played
The triumph on the face of a young person
When it is their first time on stage
The faces of my parents, my grandparents
And the rest of my family – so familiar
I feel my soul meld with theirs.

Emily is a small, gently rounded 17-year-old white girl with a quiet, breathy voice. She lives in a Washington, DC suburban area where she attends a Waldorf private high school. Sometimes hiding behind her shoulder length dark blonde hair, she is quiet and hard to read. My initial fear was that the program would overwhelm her. I was glad to be wrong. As a thirteen year old, Emily started her own summer program for a group of 15 to 20 girls. She began when the girls were 5 and 6 years old, and this year, as Emily approaches her senior year, the girls are

turning into teenagers. Each year Emily's group mounts a full-blown musical play, which Emily casts, costumes, directs, and accompanies on piano! My estimate of her ability to cope rises considerably with this information.

Though seemingly shy, Emily never swerves from any task or confrontation. She is able to hold her own. When asked a question she speaks clearly and directly to the staff or the other youth leaders. Emily maintains an optimistic, loving outlook throughout the entire three weeks. I never saw Emily angry or hopeless even when making some critical comments. She attends every activity, is always on time and appears to be happy to be there.

"I am pastel purple, I blend easily but I tend to rub off on people."

In the **Qualities** exercise Emily gives up some of humility in order to get a little more aggression. If I were her wizard, I would have been glad to see this transaction take place - - it is so right.

Emily will be a senior at the Washington, D.C. Waldorf School in September. She is the second of four children of a Catholic father and a Jewish mother from a very close extended family. Her father owned the family business, a liquor store, until he recently sold it and became a social worker. Her parents are both college educated. Emily plays piano, flute, and viola and has been involved in musical theater for ten years. She has gone to a private Waldorf school from kindergarten until third grade, was then home-schooled for a few of years, then attended public school, tried to get into Catholic school, and last year returned to the Waldorf school for eleventh grade. Though her schooling went through frequent changes, she speaks about the constants in her life:

There is one thing that has stayed steady in my life every summer since I was nine. I live in an incredible neighborhood. There are 200 families and everybody knows each other, likes each other, and raises each other's kids. I have been leading a camp for all the girls in the neighborhood who are now 12. It's been really amazing to watch them grow. It made me realize

I love working with kids. We put on a play every summer. This summer we put on a full musical. They just did so well when they performed it. It was the most amazing thing to watch these kids glow on stage. It's given me a sense of freedom I never thought it would. Yeah, I think I've really grown because of that.

Emily has clear goals and ambitions. She is applying for early admission at Vassar and hopes to become a human rights lawyer. In the Qualities Exercise, where you are to exchange a quality you need for one that you have plenty of, Emily asks for aggression and gives humility.

The commandments she believes are in her home give us a picture of what is important in Emily's family. Meaning is communicated through education, responsibility, and right action.

My Commandments

Thou shall do what is best for <u>you.</u>
Thou shall not kill
Thou shall not ignore suffering
Thou shall get a good education
Thou shall be involved in your community
Thou shall "walk the dog" (follow through on what you do)
Thou shall be respectful

Emily's reaction to the Anna Deveare Smith film, ***Twilight,*** is quiet but troubled. She speaks very little in the long, animated group discussion following the viewing but writes about it in her journal.

Violence is not the answer. I think if we actually analyze problems rationally and not let emotions, even when they are totally justified, take over we may have more of a chance of bringing about change. I worry that racism and sexism will never stop, that more and more rift will grow between the classes.

At the end of the discussion each Youth Leader speaks a few words for a check-in. Emily says, *"I just feel very humble and very blessed."*

Like many of the Youth Leaders, the Elders we invite in to speak during the first week affect Emily. Stella Mars is the director of the Martin Luther King Center in Spring Valley.

Stella Mars is a woman with a presence – vibrant, full of life, full of love. She spoke from her heart as we discussed everything from jazz to jails.

Emily has an informed but upbeat, optimistic outlook on life. She possesses a deep-seated resilience that was often initially overlooked because of her small shy demeanor and her breathy voice. The following words sum up her philosophy quite clearly.

Family and neighborhood are where peace starts, and where racism can be undone. It is truly the community that teaches values and has the best chance of curbing racism.

Prisons are a common work (slave) force. Yet despite this and other terrible things that go on in this world, this world is a wonderful place.

When the young campers arrived, Emily steps up with energy and clarity into her role as mentor and counselor. She has some trouble with discipline, especially with the boys. They are not going to listen to a small, white, soft-spoken woman. With the girls, however, she quickly works her way into a place of quiet authority. She forms close, loving relationships with her assigned girls and seems to enjoy every aspect of the Side By Side experience.

One day after play rehearsal, it starts to rain. There seems to be no end in sight to the torrential downpour and we have to walk across campus to get back to the dorms. After waiting and waiting we finally set off. Many of the campers have never walked in the rain without rain gear. At first they are hesitant to get wet. Emily nudges them with joking encouragement. By the time everyone is thoroughly wet she is singing, ***Singing in the Rain*** as she skips along. The campers, who have very few show tunes in their repertoire, soon identify this music with Emily.

After the first week with the campers we ask the Youth leaders to write a self-assessment. In this first assessment, Emily is able to articulate her strengths and the areas she hopes to improve.

I was able to form some close relationships with the children without sacrificing my role as boundary-setter and enforcer. I hope this coming week to change a few things about how I manage kids. First of all, I realize how important it is to learn the names of all the children. This would allow me to not only be a better disciplinarian when I need to be, but also be closer to the

campers. Also when leadership is needed I plan to be more ready to step up and organize whatever needs to be done.

In her follow-up interview, five months later, Emily examines the interactions within the community of Youth Leaders.

I definitely felt very comfortable with the Youth Leaders by the end. Even if we weren't hugging or kissing each other all the time, we definitely had a bond there. We could stand by each other; it felt a lot like a family.

During that fall she has given a lot of thought to the experiences of diversity and the discussions of racism. She notices the effect of her Side By Side experience back in her high school classes.

Well in my civil rights class, it's not very good. It's taught by a guy who's black and is the only black teacher in our school, so everyone looks up to him to be the racial guru. He's more of a musician and a singer. So it's not great, but I feel I've been able to bring a lot to the class. Side by Side and what we learned about the racism and historical events was great, *and I was so up-to-date on the lesson on riots. I felt like I could tell all about those.*

Emily has an unexpected epiphany in the garden:

I went from despising the garden, to tolerating it, to enjoying it --- almost! I have certainly come to be thankful for everything I eat. I think I've even gotten a bit more acquainted with nature, seeing bugs and dirt and am thankful for that though before I came here I never thought I would want to be!

When asked what, if any, impact Side By Side has exerted in her life Emily speaks:

I can't put my finger on it. Yes I do feel different; I feel more confident because I feel like what I did was pretty cool. I definitely hope to continue this work.

The staff also sees Emily become more confident and assertive over the three weeks. In the final week of camp she steps in as the drama assistant. Her voice even becomes louder at times. She continues to stay involved with other Youth Leaders and staff, helps to write the alumni newsletter and brings her mother to Side By Side fundraiser events. She is now involved in a Service program at Vassar working with elementary school children and she recently wrote to Side By Side to ask for the Journaling curriculum to use with her students. She finds meaning

in action, in aligning her work with her beliefs. My vote is on Emily to become a powerful and just civil rights attorney!

What other Youth leaders say about Emily:

You did a great job working with the kids on the play.
You are quiet but always there.
You have amazing grace, poise and courage.
Can get up at 7:30 and still be cheery enough to tell the kids stories at bedtime.
When she sings she comes to life.
You are so sweet I can't tell if you would ever get mad.
Gentle, you are the real jumping mouse. (The hero of a Native American story)
I could never tell if you were mad or not.
You would always be telling the kids something to make them feel better or saying, "I can do that for you."

2. Laura

Self-portrait.

These I have loved

Moments when I stop
during walks of rage and confusion
and look up
and watch the green light filtering through the treetops.
The smell of fire, smokes, and wood.
The fresh zip of garden basil
The touch of loving
The moon rising full and orange above the purple mountain

The first thing I notice about Laura is her speech, a warm, Southern drawl. Laura speaks slowly and thoughtfully with long pauses. She is deeply reflective and somewhat hesitant. Tall and lithe, with thin, shoulder-length brown hair, she exudes a down-home earthy flavor. Laura is a white 22-year-old recent graduate of Warren Wilson College. She hails from Ashville, North Carolina where her family has lived in the same cove, a protected spot against the mountain, (a new term for me) for four generations. Her family is an important influence in her life. Laura's roots go deep and constantly define her. She is the fourth generation of the cove named after her family. The land seems to be in her blood and bones; she identifies with her land.

I want to give you a sense of what this place is because it's where I grew up. I grew up with a small gang of kids in our little neighborhood. We just built forts, climbed trees, and in winter we crawled on our stomachs and got all icy wet. I grew up with a creek, and salamanders, and outside which is the point. I got to know certain trees. We claimed trees and certain spots in the woods and gave them names.

Laura is the oldest of three and has worried for many years that her parents were going to divorce. This is a worry she still maintains even as she leaves home. Last fall, her younger brother sustained a serious head injury as a college freshman after drinking at a fraternity rush party. This happened less than a year ago and is clearly on Laura's mind. She speaks tearfully about the changes in her brother and the effect of this accident on the family. She is considering her responsibilities to her brother and to her Mom who has the burden of his care. Though raised a Presbyterian, she went to Catholic school and later to public high school. Her school years have been filled with struggle. She was initially called dreamy and then diagnosed with some learning disabilities. She learns slowly and does not take tests well. . She is a highly sensitive young woman. She tells a story of catching the boys sniffing Whiteout correction fluid under the classroom table in grade school and her agony over her helplessness to stop it.

He looks up with this white all over. I see what he is doing and it makes me cry because they're pressuring each other to do it. I think it's a bad thing for their bodies. I really believed this deep down.

Though her high school was integrated she says there were few interracial experiences or interactions. She remembers many fights, erupting hatreds, and frequent incidences of violence. She stayed away from trouble even among her own friends, never wanting to get in trouble.

I was scared to death of any confrontation, especially about drugs or parties.

Laura is deeply, almost disfunctionally, sensitive. She is seeking a direction for her life and is wide open to ideas and suggestions. Now that she has graduated college she is facing the decision about what to do next.

I need to find a path away from my family

Laura must find a way to support herself, but feels strongly about working for an environmentally sound job after gardening and studying agriculture in college. She is talking about a pottery internship. She is also interested in an apprenticeship at a Camphill Village, a residential program for handicapped young adults.

She lists what is important to her now:

Good health, living that is low consuming, learning creatively, connection with my heritage, strong friendships, connection with food, my voice, and gardening with my hands in the earth.

In the **Qualities** exercise Laura asks for quick wit and talent with words. She gives up some of her persistence. This is a wonderfully perceptive choice.

Her reactions to the **Twilight** film and the discussion that followed are moving. As the male Youth Leaders of color are animatedly sharing many examples of police harassment and racial profiling, Laura is sobbing.

Laura*: It's so complicated, and I really didn't understand a lot of what I saw. There were people that I felt like, "oh I understand that. I think that's true." There was so much of the education, of the knowledge of what that film portrayed and actual events and all the different people's experiences, so much of that I did not understand.*

Male*: Did you feel not understanding the events made what you saw more or less true?*

Laura: I*t's just that I didn't understand it is all. Like all the stuff about the truck driver. And a lot of those times you were laughing, and I was like, "why are you laughing?"*

Male*: Well I've been in a lot of those situations, I'm used to it.*

Male*: I think it made me laugh cuz like, yeah man, I know this.*

Laura: *I'm just feeling very slow. And I need your patience and maybe I'm feeling like "do I deserve to take up all this time to learn it at this moment?" I'm willing to learn for the purpose of this conversation.*

Laura is always working hard and joining in, participating in each activity, but she often seems distracted or sad. She writes long and often in her journal and fills it with drawings and collages. The garden is one place where she truly holds her own. There she took the lead, teaching children and other Youth Leaders how to complete the tasks.

Laura's commandments illustrate her ambivalence. She is drawn in two directions: the family's value on externals and possessions vs. her longing for beauty and meaning.

My commandments
Thou shall not break the laws or rules
Thou shall not be greedy
Thou shall work hard – owning home, insurance, car, American dream
Thou shall seek the American dream for thy self and family before all others
Thou shall love and care for others
Thou shall work to be beautiful
Thou shall seek to know thyself
Thou shall fear poetry
Thou shall not harm others
Thou shall believe in God.

Laura quickly forms a relationship with the campers when they arrive. In her soft, considerate way she becomes their friend. She is quietly encouraging until she convinces the girls to write in their journals and even take walks with her in the woods.

When I was with my camper we practiced our football throwing and danced and sang. Then I taught her about some wild plants like plantains and dandelions. Then she went back and wrote about all of that in her journal!

Having the chance to interact in a considerate way with people of color is a powerful experience for Laura. She continues to speak of ***Twilight*** throughout the remaining weeks at Side By Side. She is not generally comfortable with any of the male Youth Leaders, especially those of color so any further interactions she had are especially significant to her.

An interaction I had with Anthony stands out in my mind. It was during the first week, the training week. I told him my brother had listened to hip-hop music and I had not been able to

learn about it through my brother now that he is injured. So he started giving me examples of music from different parts of the country to hear how they are different sounds, What stands out about this is that he was surprised that I wanted to learn about it.

Throughout the summer Laura was preoccupied with what she was going to do next in her life. She had just graduated and now had to support herself but she was not sure what direction to go in. She wanted to do something to help her brain-injured brother and felt guilty abandoning her mother to care for him. The staff made some calls to arrange for her to work at Camphill Village in the later fall. She found that her mentoring sessions with a staff member were very helpful.

It was really good to have some time taken out just to be listened to. I felt like during some of those moments I was able to talk in ways that I wasn't able to otherwise... It's helpful to have someone with experience and who is older.

Her self- assessment at the end of the program was almost an ode to meaning making.

Side by Side: A long way to travel in three weeks... this summer of change
I am marveling, I am curious. I am questioning how my life is changing and who I am becoming. I am secure in who I am inside, but what I am letting out surprises me and confuses me. I feel comfortable and agitated at the same time. There is something so beautiful about people you meet and people you meet when they inspire you. It is the interaction, it is the creation, made, woven and built with the whole, circular being that shine through all our faults, disappointments, losses, the creation of our circular interaction. We give to one another forming, shaping and as it is nearing completion we see the sphere taking form, with and above us, the colors of our skin and the colors of our souls fleshing and filling the sphere and as we part in our individual paths, this sphere is bounced out into the wide world and passed along in our interactions. Now I see it like ripples in a pond, but thank goodness we are not one drop making one ripple. We become many drops, and when the world rains and we are rained upon, hopefully the world can flow again.

By the time of her six- month follow up interview Laura was aware of some of the effects of the Side By Side experience on her life:

It marked the time I spent deeply engaged in sharing and listening w/ peers that were diverse and from diff backgrounds. It was really needed in my life.... I continued to really think a lot about what I experienced and issues that we talked about at Side By Side...So I really see that

time of connections w/ people at Side by Side as a milestone. It was a marker to recognizing that I had a lot to learn from people that were different than me.

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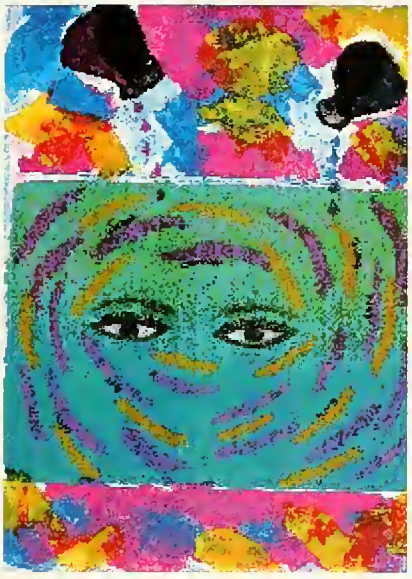
For Laura, the meaning comes through the connections and the interactions between different peoples. She begins to see a clearer direction for her life.

I wanted the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people and confront things I would not ordinarily get the chance to. I am working on feeling comfortable with being myself. The structure of Side by Side automatically did that. What really came out of my time here is my direction in life. I learned that yes, I'm Ok. I can work with kids. I'm strong enough to do it. I learned that people of color are not all just black, they are diverse races. I am starting to believe it may not be as hard to find real interaction as I thought. Interaction conducted with respect and real listening is what breaks barriers. This is what I saw in practice here.

What other Youth leaders say about Laura:

You are sensitive, passionate.
You have a beautiful voice, singing a beautiful song.
I remember how the talk on racism after Twilight really got to you.
You really felt for us and wanted to know how black people feel.
You are willing to learn, you are open.
Let it out, don't be afraid.
You have a depth, a capacity to feel.
Use your voice to move you through. You have power you have not yet used.
You are genuine. You speak the truth.

3. Kara



Self-portrait

Kara's self-portrait is almost as striking as she is.

> She writes:
> *My truth is like the real white flowers that stand outside the window*
> *My love is like water ever flowing*
> *My mind is the weather ever changing*
> *My dreams are like sugar and spice some sweet some not so nice.*
> *If I were a shape it would have to be a circle, never a point of separation connected as one.*
> *If I were a number it would be 8. I'm infinity, the never ending me.*
> *If I were a color it would be deep blue with spots of black and spots of purple.*

Kara is a tall, thin, dark-skinned African-American who carries hers self with a regal presence. With her striking features and long graceful fingers she looks like a model. Kara comes from Detroit and this is her second time at Side by Side. The previous summer she was painfully shy. She approached Side By Side wanting to return. She has just graduated from a Detroit public high school. She is 18. Kara is a young woman of paradox. She struggles with insomnia and suicidal depression. She seems very quiet and shy; yet when older adults are not looking, she

is a feisty joker. She is the sixth of seven children (from four fathers) and has difficulties with a mother who is not around much and a father she never sees. She cares about her older brother and worries about her younger sister. Through a caring mentor and a scholarship she was able to go to a private Waldorf school through eighth grade. She loved the art and peacefulness and protection of the school. In ninth grade she had a very difficult transition into public high school and in her four years there she has never really adjusted.

As a girl she remembers being a tomboy and playing with her brothers. She was never able to focus on schoolwork, but liked the art and friendships in her grade school years. High school was "*horrible, the worst high school I could ever go to*".

Kara seems to carry a great deal of sadness and some genuine anger. She has not had the support in life that she needed. She feels like an outsider in her family.

It's really hard to have nobody there with me, nobody my age, nobody that I really connect with. So I'm kinda like an outsider in my family.

Her Dad left when she was three and since then he comes into her life infrequently. She is angry with him and only speaks of him when directly asked and then with words filled with pain.

He always lied and broke promises. He started doing drugs and it's been a constant in his life. He stole from us.

Her mom is frequently moving from man to man, from job to job, and from house to house. Yet she has raised a large family mostly alone. Her mother's health had been failing and she had a stroke this year during Kara's senior year. Kara feels overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility.

After my Mom got sick it changed everything. She really wasn't able to take care of my little sister so it was put on me. A lot of responsibility that my mom should have had was put on me. I feel like I was taking care of my mom and my little sister. She's not really there anymore. I wonder if she even knows we're there sometimes.

Kara is afraid to go away to college because she worries about her little sister. She also

has trouble concentrating on schoolwork. To make matters worse, that same year her grandmother and her grandfather, the only steady influence in her life, both had strokes.

I don't see my life as bad, but I was depressed for a long time, really depressed. I got comfortable with depression; it's what I'm used to. I didn't want to be happy.

For a while Kara was seeing a therapist, but she let that go. She does not feel it was helpful. Kara and her mother have had ongoing disagreements and fights between them are common. This last year Kara was partying and involved in drug use. Finally, earlier this summer, her Mom kicked her out of the house.

It's not the worst experience because I'm not out on the streets somewhere, but I'm not at home. I have been staying with friends and some family. But I don't really want to be around my family too much because I don't get along with them I am trying to get my life back together right now.

She became aware that the drugs and partying had gotten out of control and is now trying to change that, but her support is limited and her determination does not always suffice. Kara is hard to read and only discloses information in bits and pieces. Her thoughts are often unfocused and she struggles with suicidal thoughts.

I wish that I could jump in the pond at this very moment and somehow disappear into oblivion without actually dying or hurting myself. Why would anyone want to hurt themselves? I should be asking myself that very question.

Kara, as a returning veteran to Side By Side, is crystal clear with her intentions for the time at Side By Side.

My true intentions for this week would be to become a better person for me and for the children.
I intend to make myself happier.
I intend to be myself for these full 3 weeks (never a fake moment).
I intend to bring something positive to my everyday.
I intend to compliment my campers on all that they do.
I will promise to let everybody see the real me.

She writes in her journal, clearly and in detail, what is important to her.

What's Important to Me
Music (all kinds – hip hop, alternative, pop, R&B, classical, reggae, everything),
Food (Italian, American, soul food, Mexican, Thai)
Truth (above, centerland, beyond)
Anthony & Katrina (my best kept secret) Katarina Angela Paterson, Anthony Quinn Austin, Jr.
Earth (my feet bare) sand, water, flowers, mud
Sleep (my bed, my floor, my inflatable chair, Anthony's car, Katarina's bed, Katarina's arms, Anthony's arms)
Art (My writing, my style of dress, my voice, my body, my music, my drawings)

In the **Qualities** game she needs Trust and Power to resist Jealousy. She pays for these qualities with Love. This was an interesting choice as a sense of jealousy does seem to pervade Kara's view of the world and it is not surprising, given her history that she does not trust people.

Kara does not speak much in the lively discussion following the **Twilight** film. She speaks only once about being hassled when she went into a store to shop. That night she writes in her journal:

I'm going to start by saying simply this anger. They showed the Rodney King beating and it hurt. It made me hate. Honestly I hated white people for that moment. I couldn't bring myself to cry although that's exactly what I was feeling.

Kara's creative, poetic nature comes through strongly in her journal art and writing. She is very proud of her journal and works on it long into the night. Since she is generally the last one to go to sleep, in the early morning hours, her journal blossoms as the pages fill up.

I used to be a small rolled up ball
But now I am a fully bloomed angel that has yet to fall

Kara wants to do something with art, children, and psychology. She imagines herself as a psychologist or an expressive arts therapist.

Kara has a quiet, strong presence that becomes more pronounced when the campers arrive. There is always at least one camper leaning against Kara. She often takes the most difficult girl on her lap and her presence seems to exert a calming influence. She strokes the child

or draws with her or just sits quietly and a certain peacefulness results. I notice a confidence in Kara that was not present during the previous summer. She can control and connect with and control and enjoy the campers. Her fatigue is the main interference. She is awake until early morning and has a difficult time getting her campers up for breakfast. There are afternoons when I thought she was going to soothe her camper and herself right to sleep.

Though I continue to try for months to contact Kara for a follow-up interview, I am unsuccessful. I reach her once by phone and once by e-mail but then her phone is disconnected, her e-mail no longer existed, and when I call at the designated time she is not to be found.

It is difficult to pin down Kara's path towards making meaning, especially without a follow-up interview. I believe, in Side By Side she found it most in community; she thrived on the daily caring that surrounds her during the summer program. It is almost as if, without it, she would disappear into her own thoughts and worries and hopelessness. She is not that interested in the issues of racism or in the garden or even in the adult staff and mentors. She was able to get along with all the Youth Leaders, male and female, black and white in the same slow-moving, droll manner. And for these short weeks she is content and able to imagine that she will be successful and happy. I am afraid that I doubt the lasting quality of this feeling, though I do hope it can serve as a small light to guide Kara in her coming struggles.

What other Youth leaders say about Kara:

She is truthful even when it is hard.
She is always reaching out and very present to whatever is happening.
She is serene, but if you look at her eyes, she's definitely cracking up. When you've got that devilish glint -- watch out!
I think of you as nobility, Nefretiti. There's that power that you have and I'd like to see you use it more.
You work so well with the hyperactive children, calming them with patience and kindness.
She observes everything.
She is silent, strong, steady and serene
Kara, you have such a grace and ease.

Amazing artistic talent
You think she is quiet but she really is not.
The kids would shape up with a couple of words form you.
You are a regal princess.
Kara is always cool to be around
You have a quality that makes people connect with you

4. Erin

Self-portrait

We can see from Erin's self-portrait that she is an artist. Her journal drawings are a continual inspiration to the other Youth Leaders.

These I love

The tumble of ways never ending
The fire that spreads from the first kiss
The feel of the sun's rays baking my body
The sound of wind in the trees and grass
The nights that seem to last a lifetime
And the moments where connection is made
I love the stars – I love the stars – I love poetry
Soft, simple, and profound –
I love too many things to tell,
hell, I love being cracked out in the morning

In school or on the street Erin might be labeled a freak or a new generation hippy. With her wiry body and short blond hair she has delicate features and a slightly veiled or hidden personality. She dresses in colorful wraps and tank tops and has a laid back, sexy, quiet style. She is a white, eighteen-year-old who was born in Key West, Florida. When she was a few years

old her parents bought a Bed and Breakfast in upstate New York and she attended the Waldorf School there through high school. Her parents and her one year younger brother are very close; she keeps few secrets from them. She graduated this June and has no idea what she wants to do in September. For much of the time at Side By Side Erin seems poised on the verge of rebellion. She does everything she is asked to do, participates in the activities and the tasks, but there is often resistance. An attitude of: I don't need this, this is foolish or beneath me or unimportant. In the middle of the summer session, she foments a rebellion concerning the work being too hard. In the beginning she befriends Katharina, another protected Waldorf student (white) but later abandons her for the friendship of the boys. She is usually found sitting with the males of color. She acts as if she is experienced in all this and appears to be too cool to be bothered. I get the feeling that here is this very protected small town white girl trying to be down with the sophisticated city kids (a fact she later confirms in an interview).

Erin explains that her Mom was born into an "aristocratic" Pennsylvania family. Her father is from upstate New York and went to jail in his early 20's for smuggling hashish into the country. Erin's parents bought a big farmhouse in upstate New York when she was three years old and they converted into a Bed & Breakfast.

I had a lot of fun with that. There were always a lot of people coming in and out of our doors. I worked there when I was 7 making breakfast and waiting tables on my rollerblades.

Neither of her parents ever held a real job and they did not put much effort into the financial development of the Inn. They lived a seemingly carefree, present-focused life. They were eventually forced to sell the B& B.

When I got to be 13 or 14 I started to question things and went into a phase where I tried to be in the moment and rebel against anything that wasn't. So I stayed in my room, didn't want to be beautiful, didn't talk much, spray-painted everything, dyed my hair a million different colors, cut it off, left little weird strands everywhere. I started hanging out in town. I had this boyfriend

named Rick, who was this random hippie guy. I lost my virginity to him and found out later that he might have AIDS.

At 14 Erin started hanging out in the park in her town and began getting into drugs with her 12-year-old brother. In tenth grade she decided that she did not want to go to school anymore. In the middle of 11th grade her family took off to travel. They went first to Key West and then to France. They went with very little money and no language skills with an open return ticket

It was really quite an experience. It gave me faith in people's kindness and in the cosmos. We didn't have places to go and things would present themselves to us. Put it out there and you'll get what you need. That was really, really good for me to go away at that point. I'd gotten into going to raves, taking ecstasy, a lot. It was bad. If I'd stayed there I probably wouldn't be here.

At the end of telling her narrative biography people ask her how her AIDs test turned out and she offers this advice after saying that she tested negative.

I'd like to put this out. If you're sexually active, get tested. And it's good. Those two weeks when they have your test, you're sitting there thinking of everything you have to be thankful for.

Erin's commandments communicate her desire to be unique and her own interpretation of meaning making: it can be found in the here and now importance of life.

My Commandments

1. *Thou shall do unto others, as thou would have them do unto you.*
2. *Thou shall respect thy elders*
3. *Thou shall never judge a book by its cover*
4. *Thou shall never take the Lord's name in vain.*
5. *Thou shall seize the fuckin' day*

As in her fifth commandment, Erin's attempt to be tough and streetwise came through in many places in her actions and within her journal. At the end of her poem, ***These I Love***, she adds the quick sentence about crack, *hell, I love being cracked out in the morning.* Then she tells us again that she is streetwise.

I used to be afraid
Not able to recognize reality
But now I know what it is that keeps men afloat

Her experience at Side by Side is not an easy one or a smooth transition. I think this is in part because it is difficult for Erin to be a naïve learner; she always has to be with it. In the beginning of Side By Side she was out of her element though she quickly found her place within the group.

When I first got here I felt turned upside down. There was definitely a segregation thing going on. It took a little while. I made friends with everyone pretty much.

In the **Qualities** game she asks for outgoingness and gives understanding. Neither of these would have been my choice for her. Her reaction to the **Twilight** film was subdued.

I'm sorry racism has been perpetuated on this culture. I personally have lived in a middle class white community, and it's hard to really relate to that. It's not any of my everyday life or reality. It hit me more, because I knew racism would come up here

That night she writes in her journal:

Forever Twilight, Forever in between
Forever - never knowing: How, What, Why, When?
In a way stuck, but at least stuck in the middle --Able to look both ways.

The next day there is a workshop called "**Undoing Racism**". Erin describes it.

Earlier today we had a session called "Overcoming Racism". We talked about poverty – the ghetto, the barrio, Reservations, and trailer parks a bit ... mostly about the ghetto. We also talked about white privilege. It was a pretty difficult subject. We were given the image of a moving walkway that all white people are born onto and don't realize that they are on. The image that we have to turn around and run the other way to counter balance the movement of the walkway. Seems real to me. It is that hard to realize and do something about racial privilege.

One of our visiting Elders, Stella Mars, comes to speak. She makes a big impression on many of the Youth Leaders including Erin.

Stella Mars:
A wonderful woman
A warrior
An activist overcoming all odds
A singer of soul

A mother of four
A preacher of truth, beauty and the ways of our reality.
A ray of sun for our blossoming souls

Erin is excited about hearing everyone's stories. She is especially interested in the Youth Leaders of color whose experiences are so different from hers. In response to hearing the narrative biographies of the group Erin says:

I've never really been exposed to all of this, and I feel so privileged to hear people's stories. I just see people as who they really are, not what their skin color is. It's just so sad to hear these things.

Erin's **intention** is an impressive one and reflects the possibility of her own growth..

I wanted to submerse myself in a group that was different than me and be a better person. I wanted to get across to the kids that there really is love in the world.

For her **self-assessment** she becomes aware of her insecurity about working with the children and how she is not used to being in a position of authority.

I wasn't sure how much space to give the kids, so I felt I had to be on top of them every minute, which was extremely exhausting.

In her second interview at the end of the summer program Erin explains how hard it had been for her. She speaks about the middle week, which was the first week that the campers were there.

Last week was horrible for me. An unexpected shock. I was really upset. Part of it was I didn't feel I was getting enough out of what I was doing, that it was too hard. No appreciation from staff, children, or other youth leaders. Just a lot of work for nothing. Last week it seemed that the whole community thing that we built, it wasn't there.

This was the week that Erin struggled to organize an insurrection. She had tried to get all the youth leaders to complain that they were working too hard. She pointed out the differences in pay scale: some Youth Leaders were paid to attend Side By Side while others paid to come. It

was a divisive time. But once the week was over and the children left everyone began to reflect on the positive changes and Erin's thinking begins to change.

I think I've been a positive influence.

Erin worked to achieve some closeness with her assigned campers. She draws pictures with them and gets them working in their journals. Erin is a great artist and she draws portraits of her girls and tells the girls that they are beautiful. They tell her they are black 'crispies'. They want to be light-skinned. She is stunned and saddened by those statements.

She is also proud of the work she does with a few girls in the water. She likes getting them to trust her when they are afraid.

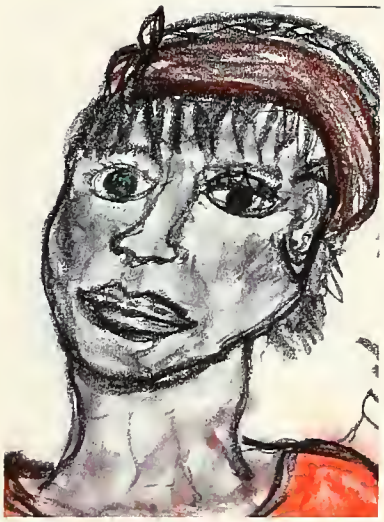
Like Dominique is just crazy afraid of the water and will only go in up to here, even when I'm with her. She screams if you even move an inch and wouldn't get off her feet. I got her to actually lay back in the water and now she likes it. She wants me to do it all the time. I have to hold her head and hold her feet. She gives her big laugh.

By the time of her six-month interview Erin is seeing things in a different way. A sense of meaning and even purpose has begun to develop. She shows an understanding for the importance of the experience in her life. When she arrived at Side By Side, she had no direction in her life, and only knew that she did not want to go to college right away. By the end she is open to possibilities and the staff at Side By Side arranged an internship placement for her in San Francisco at a home for homeless families. She goes there for three months and is so successful and well received that she stays for six months.

It took until I got home for it to sink in. And after that I was really inspired to do art and get myself out there in the world and find out what's going on. Inspired to be in motion. Just having the whole experience, you do get to know yourself better. I had a clearer sense that I could go and do something. I didn't have that same feeling like something was holding me back. It was very nice. It's also what I was looking for when I went but that's what happened in the end.

What other Youth leaders say about Erin:
You made me feel better. You are so nice.
You always seemed to be there, quietly keeping kids inline.
You never yelled.
You have a quiet, compassionate intelligence.
What a graceful dancer. I like to watch you dance.
She's sweeter than ghetto Kool-Aid.
Erin is an emancipated spirit.
She is willing to try new things.
You speak your mind with grace and love.
She is a pillar of strength

5. Brandy



Self-portrait

These I Have Loved

Fire engine red, Mustangs with sounds you can hear from miles.
The aroma of my mom's home apple pie and the way the sweetness of the apples taste on my tongue.
A nice hot shower after a long journey on the coldest mountain peak.
A bright smile with a firm handshake.
McDonalds, never Burger King, delicious salty fries.
The way music flows through my body like water in a stream.

Picture a strong, athletic black girl from the inner city of Detroit with a broad, expressive face and an enthusiasm to beat the band and you will begin to have an idea of Brandy. Brandy stood out right away. She is very dark, physically strong, and has a great laugh. She was raring to go. "*cuz I LOVE children*". She says that first thing when asked why she is at Side By Side and she says it all through the weeks. She is shy at first but by the end of the first group session her shyness seems to be gone. She is always the first to take her turn, ready to share what she has written or show what she has drawn. She shares often and deeply. She works hard on everything we do.

Not yet 18, Brandy demonstrates a responsibility and maturity that becomes the beacon for us all. Yet she does it in a humorous, seemingly effortless way. She has a mother and father she respects and both have good jobs. She has a younger brother and two older half sisters. Brandy has had plenty of hardships, but whether it is her upbringing or her temperament, she always makes the most of things. She repeatedly demonstrates her love of children. She gets along with her roommate, Emily, and with all the counselors. The campers are usually found in clumps around Brandy. And she never seems to need a break from them. She tells horrifying tales of her house being firebombed that have the listeners rolling on the floor with laughter. When there is conflict she steps right in and smoothes things out. The others go to get her at the first sign of trouble.

Brandy will be a senior at the Detroit public high school. Her mother got pregnant with her sister at 15 and her two older half-sisters are teenage mothers also. Brandy does not intend to make the same mistake.

I was born into the world as a sickly baby. As a small baby I was very weak and sick, with yellow jaundice, and so much in need of a blood transfusion. Well, everyone knows what happened because I stand before you today.

Her older sister is a drug addict and a constant source of trouble in the family. For many years she was verbally abusive to Brandy, calling her "ugly" and "too dark".

She is prejudiced against females and she don't like dark-skinned people. So no matter what I did, 'Oh that's bad, that's terrible.' I used to think so negatively about myself I didn't have any kind of confidence.

Brandy was a tomboy and played football with the guys until seventh grade, but in junior high as she entered into puberty she became self-conscious and unhappy and her self-esteem plummeted.

In my 7th grade year I started getting female friends because the guys I hung around with wouldn't really want to be friends anymore. We cool, but we ain't as tight as we used to be. I felt

bad. When I got to high school I was still kinda self-conscious about myself. I had negative thoughts about myself. I never looked into people's eyes, I always looked down.

Brandy credits a boyfriend, a best friend, a drama teacher and being on the basketball team as all playing a part in building up her confidence. She is very close to her dad but this last year, as a junior she quit basketball because her coach and her dad were hounding her so much that it was no longer fun.

Brandy speaks with sadness about 1999 as the worst year of her life. Three people who were important to her died that year. Her infant niece and her uncle both died from medical causes and her friend was shot and killed on the street.

I remember 1999; it had to have been the worst year of my life. I lost three people, two of natural causes and a really close friend to a gun. It's kind of funny, because just before my boy, Daryl was shot, he was chillin' over at my house hoopin'. He said we needed to get together and become tighter than what we were. "You know!" I said, "Yeah" "Feel ya".
So three days later he was gone. He wasn't even the type that you'd think would just go out like that. He was one of them smiley kids. A lazy sweetheart he never had a worry. I miss him! I'll never forget him.

Brandy tells the story of the death of this young man in detail during her biography. She explains about it being a revenge death that was not even justified: Daryl didn't do what they thought he did, but gangs and guns and quicker than anyone expected and Daryl was shot and killed. The entire group of Youth Leaders is deeply moved by her sharing of this story.

She has worked in a local (Detroit) after school program as a counselor. In that work she discovered how much she enjoys working with children. Last summer she went to a medical program because she wants to be a cardiologist.

Every year I try to do something different and open my mind to a lot of different things.

What Is Important to Me:

Love, honesty, music, sleep, future, family, food, education

Her **intentions** for Side By Side are personal and practical:

I would like to start and influence one of the children who come into this program. I would hope that my being here has made the week of one child happy and helped them enjoyed it.

In the **Qualities** exercise Brandy asks for happiness and gives generosity in return.

The strong influence of Brandy's family can be felt in her clear commandments. Rules in her house are unambiguous and descriptive. She seems rooted in a strong family from which her meaning is based.

Ten Commandments

1. *Thou shall think with head, not your heart.*
2. *Thou shall respect all.*
3. *Thou shall not speak unless spoken to.*
4. *Thou shall not steal or lie.*
5. *Thou shall not hate, but love.*
6. *Thou shall see with eyes and not hands.*
7. *Thou shall not engage in violence or put hands on another individual.*
8. *Thou shall not curse (speak words of the devil).*
9. *Thou shall not raise voice to an authority figure or anyone for that matter.*
10. *Thou shall not believe Every word from the horse, but find own facts*
11. *Thou shall get an education.*

Brandy is quite outspoken in the discussion following the viewing of **Twilight.**

Twilight *was a very devastating movie and violent. The things that I saw inside the movie was no shock to me because everyday I am exposed to violence. I was really sad to watch it, just ANGRY, because just the fact in order to receive justice, you have to react in a violent manner. People only wake up when shit is blown up or someone is getting hurt. It makes me mad to know, although it is on paper and documented that " All men are created equal." The reality and the truth is that we are not equal. When I say we I mean minorities. Black, Hispanic, woman, Gay & Lesbian... everyone... to me everyone has a prejudice in them.*

Brandy seems to be always up beat and part of the program. She projects a positive Attitude towards everyone and campers and Youth Leaders want to be around her. Many times I ask her if she wants a break and she always declines. She does not want to mss anything and she exhibits a very strong, no-nonsense work ethic. One youth leader related this about Brandy:

She was telling us about the fire in the house. A few years ago her house was firebombed. They woke up to flames and were grabbing things and trying to get out. Her Dad went to wake her little brother, but they could not wake hi because he is a sound sleeper. As she is acting out this story we are rolling on the ground laughing. It was so FUNNY. And then I realize... this is a terrible story. Why am I laughing? But Brandy is SO funny.

Brandy's **Intention** arises out of an idealistic, altruistic place.

I wanted to inspire and influence the children.

Brandy is usually clear about herself and goal oriented in her actions. She knows what she wants to do, what she plans to be, and how she will get there. Though she is the one the campers and Youth Leaders approach to deal with any conflict resolution needs, she sees her need for improvement.

Something that I did well was when I was able to resolve a few conflicts between several of the girls. They listened to me and followed directions. Next week.. I'd like to be more organized with games and etc. But I don't think that I'm very good with handling conflicts, but this week I felt like I was effective.

Brandy writes a list of recommendations that she will pass on to her son or daughter. They are a moving testimonial to goodness and justice. She accepts her family commandments and makes them personal and applicable.

To My Boy/Girl

1. *Never walk to the beat of someone else's drum.*
2. *Hold your head up, Never look down. Look into the eyes.(Although I don't I'm looking @ it)*
3. *Never be afraid to cry.*
4. *You're worth more than anything.*
5. *Never let money own you.*
6. *Be your own boss.*
7. *Never settle for less.*
8. *Opportunity ... take it!*
9. *Never raise your voice @ anyone. They hear you, but are not listening.*
10. *Work smart, not hard.*
11. *Don't wear your heart on your sleeve.*
12. *Everything you hear is not necessarily the truth.*

13. Love yourself, before you love others.
14. Think then speak.
15. Whatever you do, be the best at it.
16. Never let anyone steal your smile.

Brandy brings her clear enthusiasm to each task. She truly enjoys all the activities and all the people and seems to interact almost effortlessly with black and white, male and female, camper and Youth Leader.

The things I enjoyed the most were playing w/ the kids, art room, seeing outcome of the play after all the hard work. It was so rewarding. Things I didn't like, there wasn't too much not to like about it. I grew to love it. There's really nothing negative I have to say. You always have your good and bad times, but it was always good for me. One bad thing, the kids waking up at 5 o'clock in the morning. But it was still good.

Brandy appears to make meaning and find purpose in everything she does. She believes in the importance of working with children and wants to right the wrongs of the world. She feels strongly that her Side Bt Side experience is a worthwhile one and she wants to return the following summer.

Before I came to Side By Side, I had no idea it was going to be so many different people and cultures. I just thought it was going to be some kids. Since I work for the recreational department of Detroit, I don't see too many white or Latino kids. It's predominantly black kids. When I thought of kids, I thought about the kids from Detroit, to be honest. To be honest, I'd never worked with such diverse races of kids. They opened my mind. A lot of the kids I know, their parents don't really have time to sit down w/ the kids so they just give them something to play with. Kids in Detroit, didn't really want to do art. Kids in New York were like, "yeah, I want to go!" That made me happy, I love art and they wanted to expand their minds.

What other Youth leaders say about Brandy:
She was always able to inspire and influence the children she was working with.
Brandy, you were always positive.
Your smile lights us up.
Brandy is so totally capable.
Her humor was our guiding light.
You are the Mother spirit.
You are sweet but strong, steel but soft
You are Awesome.
Brandy has the BEST laugh. I need a recording of it.
She is honest.
Fantastic

6. Katharina

Self portrait

These I do love

The smell of the air after it has rained
A hug from those I love
My new baby nephew as delicate as a flower
The vibrancy and beauty of a blossom
To dance across the floor yet fly like a bird
The feeling of freedom
To run barefoot across a soft meadow with my hair flowing around me.

A tall gangly women's body with thick curly light brown hair and a little girl's voice with an outlook that fluctuates between the woman and the girl gives us an idea of the paradox of Katharina. Katharina fought determinedly for two years to be able to come to Side by Side. She has a determination and will power that are witnessed during the summer. She is going into her senior year at the Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado. Her mother is German, her father German-American and they lived in Germany for her eighth and ninth years. She is the youngest of three girls. What you will diseover about Katherina if you speak more than one sentence of conversation with her is that she LOVES to dance. A few years ago she began to learn swing

dancing, and now it is a dominant influence in her life. She gives a few interested Youth Leaders lessons in the kitchen.

Katharina grew up on the edge of a farm in New Hampshire. Her parents were working at the Waldorf School and she lived there for the first seven years of her life. Her memories are filled with joy and wistfulness.

I remember my past life in New Hampshire, the garden, the farm, and my red house. I can remember playing outside in my big back yard swimming in the lake, running across the fields, getting food from the garden.

Her family moved to Germany before she turned eight years old. She remembers the struggle of a new language and school challenges and cruel classmates. She did not fit in and her two years in Germany were painful. When she was ten her family returned to the United States and settled in Boulder where her Mom teaches German at the Waldorf School that Katharina attends.

Katharina has taken a lot of teasing in her life. Perhaps it is because of her serious intensity. Some of her classmates in Colorado call her controlling. As a young girl in Germany she was often tormented.

My classmates actually physically abused me. The boys in my class, they were mean to me. They started beating up on me. That could have been because I sucked my thumb at the time. I still have a scar from them pushing me down on the pavement. So it was rough for me.

Katharina's older sister, with whom she has always fought, recently moved back home to have a baby. Katharina is full of stories about the home birth that she attended which had serious health complications for her sister. She feels that they are closer now, because of the birth and the baby. She loves to tell about her new nephew. And she loves to tell about dance. She had always been clumsy and uncoordinated and is not good at any sports. But when she started

taking swing dance something changed. Now she attends dances and competitions every weekend, complete with the outfits, the shoes and the search for a good partner.

Dance opened up my life --- form of expression, freedom. Now new social group. Made me a lot more coordinated.

Katharina was so eager to attend Side By Side she tried to get in the year before when she was too young to qualify. She had been very sheltered by her family and seems young even at 18. She spent her years in Waldorf Communities in Boulder and in Germany where she had few opportunities for multicultural experiences. She starts out at Side By Side enthusiastic but naïve. Yet she is a little out of her element in the interactions at Side By Side. She has trouble connecting with the other Youth Leaders especially the Youth Leaders of color. She has an even harder time with the campers. They consider her too strict and no fun and made it a point to avoid or ignore her. It is interesting to see that her **intentions** are about connections, very idealistic and all about her impact on others, not about her own growth.

I would like to connect to all the people here at Side By Side. I would like to have a bit of time to connect to each and every individual at one point or another during these three weeks. I hope to bridge any gaps of "old impressions" and look beyond the racial gaps. I want to show people that every individual is unique and that we cannot be judged by the past. No human is the same, we are all unique and I hope we all may blossom and learn form each other. I also want to get to know my children really well. Maybe they never could talk to anyone about things in their lives. Well, I hope I can provide that trust and nurturing all these children need and deserve.
** I never really got to that point with my campers* [added later].

What is Important to Me

Self-love and respect, friends, dance, honesty, sleep, food, family.
In Dance: Letting go, getting to know others, freedom, connection, loving it, letting my self/soul fly.

Katharina wants to be a teacher of children in some form probably within Waldorf education.

I used to be an innocent child
But now I am a vibrant woman

Her comments during the **Twilight** discussion are minimal: I don't think she knows what to make of it.

I think kids at a young age should be taught to love everybody.

During the first week a troubling incident occurs between Katharina and Bernard, the oldest male youth leader and a black man from the south. Early in the first week, Bernard propositions Katharina. He asks if she would sleep with him explaining that he has never slept with a white woman and wants to try it. Katharina is indignant and reports it to the staff. This is discussed more in the next chapter.

Katharina has a strong, connected, almost generic, commandment list. I found the last one to be most interesting. It sounds ideal to treat everyone equally, but is it possible or even always right?

The Commandments

Thou shall not kill
Be kind to others
Do unto others as you will have them do unto you.
Help those that are in need
Don't be greedy
Respect your elders
Never lie
Treat everyone equally

The campers assigned to Katharina the first week transfer themselves to Brandy and her children. Katharina approaches the children strictly. The rules are primary and the children, needless to say, do not react well to her. The first week of camp she has almost no exposure to the campers. Brandy even put her campers to bed. The second week Katharina does a little better relating to her campers. She has a similar interaction with her fellow Youth Leaders. She is often

nagging them about the schedule or the clean up and she does not easily relate to them in any other manner. She writes in her journal:

I'm getting a bit frustrated with the children. It's hard work! I wish the leaders would take more initiative for their own children; some of the children need more attention; loving maybe not all touchy and huggy but just more respect and attention. Outside I can deal with the noise a bit better right now. Please help me, give me strength, endurance and self-will.

When it comes to writing a **self evaluation** Katharina, in her usual way, gets right to the point.

> *What I would like to do differently next week:*
> - *I would like to learn more names*
> - *Connect to more people.*
> - *Be more direct and less flaky.*
> - *I think I could have been less bossy and expressed my frustration in a different way.*

Katharina puts a great deal of time and thought into writing some advice to her future son or daughter. Not surprisingly it is very personal.

> **To My Son or Daughter**
>
> *Do what you want to do don't feel pressured into anything (peer pressure)*
> *Be caring to everyone*
> *Love everyone even if they don't love you*
> *Only fight back in self-defense*
> *Don't kill*
> *You are the only person who can take care of you so stand up for what you need.*
> *Respect your elders, they have more life experience*
> *Do what you do, do it the best you can.*
> *Love yourself first*
> *Distinguish love from lust*

When asked what she has learned Katharina replies:

I suppose I wouldn't take charge for everybody else. But when I don't see other people doing something, I want to pick up the slack. I want to make sure the children are taken care of, and not doing something they're not supposed to. I easily take on other people's things. Even with my family I do that. I give a lot of myself and I think it's a sense of wanting more of that love back, or more than what people are giving. I want to take on things if it's not there. But I guess it would be better for me not to take charge all the time.

In the follow-up interview Katharina speaks of two changes. One change is that when she attends dances or other public events, she notices how white they are. She now wonders why she is not participating in anything where people of color are also present. The other change is the intensity of her journal keeping.

What's really changed, is I keep journaling. It's so wonderful. I have a very full journal and I write about things w/ Corbin (her young nephew). I definitely have since Sept 11th. I showed my teacher my journal. I have a lot of art in it and people really like it. He said, "I always wondered why people do these time-consuming, complicated books. This has really showed me why.

I am moved by Katharina's account of her growing awareness of race and inequalities. She is making some new meaning at her pace and in her style, but there it is. She tells me that she is often at events or meetings in her area and she notices that everyone is white. She never before noticed the absence of diversity in her surroundings. I believe this noticing is the first step to understanding issues of racism. It is a big step. I would like to check-in with Katharina's meaning making in another year.

Side By Side has made me more open and tolerant and aware of the issues of race that some deal with daily.

What other Youth leaders say about Katharina:
You had boundaries and set them out clearly
You read to the children and told them stories
You were strict.
Your voice carries attention.
You were persistent and would not give up.
You set the tone from the beginning. You would say, "I don't think that's appropriate". I admire that.
You have so much courage, you never give up.
You are steadfast and stand for righteousness.

7. Blythe

Self-portrait

These I have loved (and do love)

My dog Brownie
Oh how loving he was
My grandma, her gentle, loving ways
Almost all little children for the joy they give to you
Oh how I could go anywhere with my family
And my friends,
I say where would we be without them
Warm under my blanket at night.

Blythe is a sturdy, loud-voiced, white Midwesterner with a close-cropped crew cut of blonde hair. She is sincere and rather blunt with no room for deception or subterfuge. We knew ahead of time that Blythe experienced serious learning disabilities and had been home schooled most of her life. At 22 she lives with her family on 200 acres of farmland in Iowa. She is the second of five children and she is still very dependent on her mother. Her family is the primary influence in her life.

My family loves taking people and animals in. We live on almost 200 acres and my parents are into prairie and organic farming and gardening and they're more into trying to keep all the natural resources into the land instead of taking it away. Most people in Iowa are really into chemicals and we're 100% against it.

Her parents are both Catholic and college-educated. Her father has done many different things, changing his life course and his family's life frequently. He went to medical school and practiced medicine for a few years. He now works as a grain inspector in Iowa. Her Mother makes natural cloth dolls and sells them through schools and trade fairs. Blythe helps her sometimes.

I went to Waldorf School until third grade. Then I was in special education because I was a slow learner. A lot of people don't get how this happened, but I didn't know how to tell time. I don't know how to read well. I read a lot but I avoid the hard stuff. Spelling is hard for me. After that I was home-schooled.

Safety and connection is important to Blythe and she seems to receive both within her family. Now that she is older there has been an attempt to move her out on her own.

My older brother is 23, then me, then my brother is 18, 15 and my sister is13. My mom came from a family of 3 real sisters and 7 adopted brothers and sisters. My dad came from 5 sisters and 1 brother. Our family is a very close family. When I fight with my parents, I fight until I think I've won.

She was born in Iowa where she lives now, but in the intervening years of her life her family has moved many times. She has lived in Oregon, Maryland, Tennessee, Georgia and California. Though the place seemed less important than the fact that the family was there.

My brothers are known for being wild guys. My younger brothers decided to catapult a live chicken. We tried to jump on a board and make a chicken fly. Instead the board hit him. The chicken just walked off. Another thing that happened, we had a b-b gun. My cousins and my brother thought they had the safety on. They hit my brother, and if they hadn't hit a bone, he'd have been gone.

Blythe has done some traveling with her family in Europe and loves the adventure of new places and meeting new people. Blythe is constant and enthusiastic about her love of little kids and her dream is to become a Waldorf kindergarten teacher. The past year she worked as a nanny caring for a 16-month-old girl and for a short time she maintained her own apartment. She talks about her love of photos and carries a small photo album with her filled with shots of herself

with family, the children she baby sits for, and friends. She takes many photos at Side By Side and we make her the official photographer. The camera seems to afford her a little distance and protection from the group.

Blythe brings her unflagging energy to Side By Side. She is the timekeeper, always gets to activities on time and usually nags others to keep moving. She tells us on the first day that she loves to baby-sit children and that she came to Side By Side because she loves children. She never swerves from her love of interacting with the children even when they resist her drill sergeant manner. Blythe keeps to herself, she does not seem to make any strong interpersonal connections, but she participates fully and I think most of the youth leaders have come to respect her in her own way. She writes about her goals for her life.

I want to teach and work with young children and be a Waldorf kindergarten teacher. And get married.

In the **Qualities** game Blythe asks for patience, and she gives generosity. I find a melancholic wisdom in this choice; Blythe's unpretentious willingness to give whatever she can to whomever might need it with the wistful longing that she might find the patience to deal with the challenges in her life. I see something similar in her reaction to the film **Twilight.**

A lot of it was good, but some of it was hard to look at. I closed my eyes.

She struggles with her reaction to the **Undoing Racism** workshop.

It was hard to take in; I didn't know what they were talking about. I am not used to being with black people. The black people went in one room and the white people went in another room. And then you're going "so what have you benefited from in the past?" and I'm going "it's not something I think about every day." I just go on with whatever's happening that day.

Blythe's commandments are direct - she likes clarity and matter-of-factness. She adds one we have not seen yet: Be open-minded. Her family has helped her to make meaning; she needs them to set her parameters.

My Commandments

1. *Do unto others as you want them to do unto you.*
2. *Be open-minded*
3. *Watch your back*
4. *No cursing*
5. *No fighting*
6. *Don't talk back to your elders*
7. *Don't eat before we say grace.*

In her second interview during the final day of camp she speaks of the community that has developed between the Youth Leaders. She describes feeling part of everyone and how good that is. She connects most with Laura, another Youth Leader.

I feel Laura is the kind of person who loves to talk, but loves listening. And doesn't mind if you're just sitting there and you start to talk and talk and talk and talk. And she'll listen until you're done and she'll give you feedback, if she feels she wants to.

At the end of the program she has an insightful **self-assessment**.

I wanted to give love and joy to the kids but the first week I was too bossy. This week I was more easy going and my kids loved everything. I want to take, Iona (her assigned camper) home with me I love her so much.

Blythe loves the children and works hard to interact with them. She does better with the younger ones. The older ones who are already headed into puberty are too challenging of her authority. She admits that she is too bossy the first week with the children and does better the second week when she learns to take it easy. She also has only one camper the second week and she is young.

I sort of always had that trouble keeping up w/ kids, w/ my learning disability, just because I learn slower than people. But I was amazed how well it went.

Despite some connections and being part of the group process, Blythe reports that she is not close to many people and that she wishes she had gotten to know people better. She hangs back during free time, but during the exercises she participates to her full ability. She is aware of the challenge of being part of a group that contains differences.

People are from backgrounds where there's a lot of fighting and I'm not used to being around those kind of people who have a lifestyle where they have to worry about people that are walking around them. I heard about these things when they were talking about their life story and their home life.

Like much of the Side By Side program, the narrative biographies are a challenge to Blythe. She is terrified about being in the spotlight. I think the accepting attitude of the participants and staff eases her way though much of the program is not easy for her.

The reason biography made me nervous, people are on a certain topic and I have to say such and such, this is what's going thru my brain, this is what I should say. Then it comes your turn and it's like: it's really my turn. What should I say? At first it was like, "I don't know if I can say this" but then the mentors said, "feel free to just speak up and say whatever, it'll just be kept in this circle." And I thought, "Ok, I can say some things I wasn't going to say."

Yet in her honest, straightforward manner she comments on some others' process in the telling of Biographies. Two of the men of color went on at some length telling about all the violence and hardships in their lives. Most of the group is fascinated, but for Blythe it is somewhat tiresome.

I felt like a few of the biographies they were going on and on. Ok, we love to hear about your life, but it doesn't need to be a book on it. Some people talk a lot because they have so much stuff going on in their head and they feel if they tell people it will ease up the pain inside them.

In a moment of frustration Blythe tells Henry, a fellow Youth Leader who was male and African- American, that he could go to hell and she is shocked that she has taken him on. She is angry at his continual lateness and finally explodes over his oversleeping again. She repeatedly

says that she wishes she had not said that, but I think she is a little proud that she had. Like a few other Youth Leaders, Blythe objects to the lack of participation in a few of the male Youth Leaders, especially Bernard.

There were a few times he'd be in his room and like, his kids were running around. Or one or two of the guys would get their lunch and have to leave the kids at the pool to get their lunch. Everyone made their kids' lunch the night before, but they were "oops I forgot your lunch, I'll be back." I'm the kind of person who loves to be on time. But I just felt that some of the guys for free time would go off somewhere and by the time they get back they're 5 or 10 minutes late. And we're just sitting there like "we are ready to start, but not everyone is here." I would say, "Time to go!" and people were like Ok. I would get there with my kids and 2-3 or more minutes later people would show up.

Yet despite the struggles she speaks of her wish to continue to live in community.

Yeah, I was definitely different after Side By Side and meeting people from different backgrounds and different lifestyles. I love being in community type things. I always love helping out. If I see someone who needs help, I'll help them.

Blythe is always ready to help out in the kitchen, in the art room, in the dorm. She loves cooking with others and helping out in general. She is clear about her need for outside direction.

I'm the kind of person, I need to be motivated. I need someone to direct me. I'm the kinda person who says "I want to do this" and I do it for a while but then I'm like, "ok I can't do this anymore." But if I know I have to do this and I have to be there, then I'll do it.

Blythe looks up to Brandy, a Youth Leader who is enthusiastic and active with the campers.

Like Brandy, she got her point across to the kids. When they were not behaving right she got her point across in a way it wouldn't be like mad, or bossy. She was the motivator of everything. She was calm and easy and all the kids wanted to be with her.

Because of her comfort and experience in the garden, Blythe enjoys interactions with the campers during the garden time.

The one day we had snack from the garden and the kids were like "tomatoes, I can't have that." And some of the youth leaders were like, "just try it, it won't hurt you." Then they try and they go, "it's ok." Then they try it the next day and they go "can I have another one of those!?"

Yeah, some of the kids were like "I'm not using one of these hoes, I'm not picking weeds!" I noticed the first week one of my kids was like "I'm not picking vegetables" and the next day "can I pick vegetables?" I said, "well it's not our day to be picking" and it's like, "but I want to!"

I would agree with Blythe's own assessment at the end of the program. I think she makes meaning out of being part of a group that is doing work that is needed.

I was a little shy, but other than that, I thought ok. I learned how to work with lots of different people.

What other Youth leaders say about Blythe:
You were there for the kids --- I admire that.
You say what you are thinking.
Gave me an interesting perspective
Always saw an inner fire – intense
Trustworthy – I could trust you with anything
I appreciate your punctuality and responsibility
Always ready for what comes next
Would like my kids to have you as a kindergarten teacher
I like the way you are on point
You were there for the kids --- I admire that. You say what you are thinking.

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Chapter Seven

Data Analysis

The case studies, described in the previous chapter, examine meaning making from an integrative, holistic perspective through the lenses of the girls' experiences. In examining meaning making, I seek to understand the personal, ever-changing perspectives of the Youth Leaders' individual differences. I wish to recognize some of the many ways that meaning making comes about in the experience of the seven adolescent girls in this study, during their summer experience at Side By Side. Despite the fact that each girl's story is unique, there are certain themes in regard to meaning making that seem to emerge from the data and these themes are worthy of further study.

Chapter Six consisted of a description of each girl in the study and a capsule description of her experience at Side By Side. This section briefly highlights the key similarities and differences across each of the case studies focusing on the activities, strategies, and results associated with making meaning. In this chapter I will look at these experiences collectively. I will seek to answer the following questions. What is common to these girls in their experience with Side By Side and what is unique to each girl? Do experiences vary based on race, or age, or background? Are there any observable lasting results? I will evaluate the significance of the participants' experiences, drawing from their own words and writings and from my observations. Out of the data, I have discovered some themes. I will first present the overview of who the participants are in terms of age, schooling, family, race and residence. I will report on the results

of two journaling exercises, ***Intentions*** and ***What Is Important to Me***. Following that I will present an analysis of the six emerging themes:

1. The campers (the service component)
2. Mentors
3. Community
4. Arts and Journaling
5. Diversity and Racism
6. Challenges and changes

I will summarize the ways these seven young women used aspects of these six themes to make meaning in their lives. In the concluding paragraphs of this chapter, I will look at some of the conclusions and implications of the study.

Who are they?

The seven participants of this study were all young female native-born United States Citizens. They range in age from 17 to 24.

- Three are 17 years old, two are eighteen, and two are in their 20's.
- Two participants just graduated high school, one just graduated from college.
- Five participants are white and two are African-American.

Where they live:

- The two African-American Youth Leaders live in the city of Detroit.
- Two of the white Youth Leaders live in suburban areas.
- Three of the white Youth Leaders live in rural or semi-rural areas.

All but one are from intact families with their parents still married. They all have

siblings, ranging from one to six. Two have half siblings also. Two participants report not doing well in school. Four report doing well, and one reports doing excellently in school.

In response to a questionnaire about major stressors they have had to face there was dramatic difference for the girls of color. Of the five white girls, three report having had no significant stressors in their lives. One listed financial pressures, while one reported facing some depression and minor drug issues. Both girls of color listed depression, trauma, violence, and deaths and one added alcohol and substance abuse, divorce, and financial pressure. The white girls reported experiencing one or two of these stressors through the experience of friends or family members while the girls of color had faced all of the stressors through others in their lives.

Brandy: *I saw a person get shot and killed in front of my face for the first time. I was kinda trembling because it didn't happen to me. The guy walked passed to me, I was like "What just happened?" In my area you see a lot of violence going on, people getting beat up over a basketball game. So it's not that shocking at all. I seen stuff happen that's a lot worse. I had a gun pulled on me, had a knife to my throat before.*

What was their stated intention for the Side By Side experience and how well did they achieve it?

Blythe and eampers

One goal of the Side By Side staff is to help the participants develop a practice of reflection leading to meaning making. To this end, on the very first day, we ask them to write their intentions for the time they will be at Side By Side. At the very end of the summer program they re-read these intentions and speak about how they succeeded and if the intentions changed during the time that passed. Besides serving as a reflection exercise this also becomes a goal-setting practice. The Youth Intern's intentions give us some insight into meaning making.

Six participants want to impact the children.
Four participants say they want to become a better person.
Three speak of wanting to have an experience of diversity
Three want to build relationships.

Emily's intention is to help the children and to grow herself.
After the first week of camp she says she wants to do better learning the names of all the children and be a better leader. At the end she says, "*I feel I was able to form some close relationships with the children without sacrificing my role as a boundary setter and enforcer. I wanted to help the children, but I think I grew the most.*"
She feels that the Youth Leaders all grew together " *because we all had to get along and act like we got along, just to be able to work with the kids. We sort of had to rise above any pettiness we might have. And people who were there really wanted to work hard, to get along with each other and to give the kids a great camp experience.*"

Laura wants the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people and to "*seek out and possibly confront openly stereotypes in hopes I will take each person for themselves, and really get to know each person in a way that helps me to understand beyond stereotypes. I want to feel OK or comfortable being myself with people.*" And finally she " *would like to find the strength and confidence I need to lead and work with kids.*"
Laura is proud of the activities she led with the children, especially gardening. "*I feel I am able to do really well, especially one-on-one with the children,*" She explains when the realization hit; "*I remember thinking at one point this week, 'Yeah, I can do this.' I have gotten confirmation that I'm capable of working with kids and I'm good at it. And its something that feels right for the direction in my life.*"

Kara wants to be a better, happier, more authentic person. She wants to "*let everybody see the real me.*"
She reports, " *I think apart from being so tired in here, I'm doing a pretty good job.*

My allergy medicine, wipes me out, but otherwise, I'm doing good." She connects strongly with the children and with the other Youth Leaders. Kara is even happy, or at least as happy as Kara gets. I am unable to schedule a follow-up interview with Kara so my data is limited.

Erin wants to be part of a group that is different than her norm and to become a better person. In addition she wants to show the children that there really is love in the world. She feels she "*definitely*" learned more about racism and loved the experience of diversity that the summer gave her. Though at first uncomfortable with the participants of color she quickly becomes "tight" with them and is quite pleased with her ability to be part of those interactions.

She thinks she has been "*a positive influence*" for the children. During the swimming session Erin is active teaching children how to relax and swim. She said she "*had people trust me who were afraid*" in the water.

Brandy wants to build a long lasting friendship with the people she will be working with. She wants to inspire and influence the children. Brandy is satisfied with the entire experience. *"It feels like a second home to me."* She is pleased with her ability to solve some conflicts between the campers. "*They listened to me and followed my directions. I felt that I was effective.*" Brandy has some ideas for improvement. *"[The children] are looking at us as a role model so you have to be cautious about what you do. Some of the Youth leaders don't realize what a big influence we are on the children."*

Katharina wants to connect with everyone and show that we can get beyond racial stereotypes and show people that everyone is unique She also wants to get to know the children and get them to trust her. " *Maybe they never could talk to anyone about things in their lives. Well. I hope I can provide that trust and nurturing all these children need and deserve."*

Katharina does not feel she succeeded. *"I wanted to connect with everyone, youth leaders and children and get the children to trust me. I didn't do it."* She says she was too bossy and too frustrated. She is also angry with some of the Youth Leaders because they do not follow the rules and do enough work. Katharina is young and inexperienced and it shows in both her intentions and outcomes.

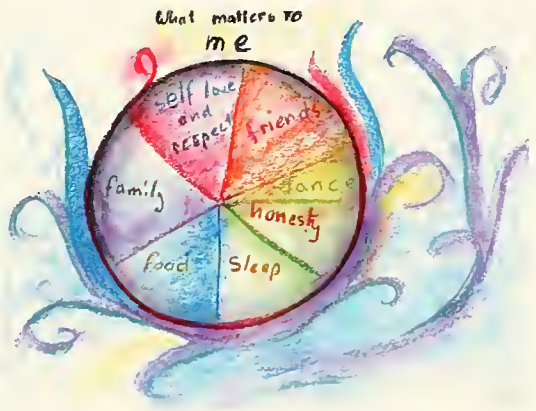
Blythe wants to give love and joy to the children.
"*I enjoyed being with everyone so much and it just felt like ' this is my life'. I totally forgot about the outside world."*

Blythe seems to do much better with the campers the second week. *"I think I was too bossy with my kids because they liked me, but they wished I would have been more easygoing. Then this week I was more easygoing. I noticed that I am a bossy person.*

Her connections with the Youth leaders were not as strong. *"I liked them, but I wasn't close to them. I wasn't close to very many people. I wish I had gotten to know people better. Talk a little more. But I was more focused on the kids than on the counselors.*

Each Youth Leader identified intentions that were connected to higher goals and purposes. If we listen to the actual words of these Youth Leaders they all speak of learning and growing from the experience of the summer. All wanted either to connect with other Youth Leaders or with the children and to grow into better people. They want to do good in the world through the work with the children. All seven made some progress towards meeting their stated intentions and all expressed some satisfaction with their experience.

What is important to me?



The answer to this question came out of a journal activity during the first week of Side by Side. Participants are asked to draw a circle in their journal, divide it into eight spokes and write in each spoke one something that matters, that is important, in their lives. There are many similarities and some differences.

- Five categories are cited by five of the seven participants: family, friends, food, creative pursuits (art or dance), and truth or honesty.
- Three categories are cited by four of the participants: love, music, and sleep.
- The categories of fun, children, school, and health are each cited by two participants.
- Books, photos, and rest are each listed as important to one participant.

When I place the categories of love, family, and friends into the theme that I call connections, we discover that "connections" is cited as important by all the Youth Leaders. They all want connections with family, friends, and/ or love in their lives.

If I then combine the categories of creative, music, photos into one theme, which I call the "creative arts", this is also important to all the participants. Each participant cites a form of creative arts as important in their lives.

The last theme is making meaning. It appears that each participant is concerned with something that is larger than themselves. The categories of truth and honesty and connection to the earth fit into the theme of meaning- making. We then begin to see that within this simple activity of drawing a wheel of what is important, we find three themes of significance: connections, creativity, and meaning making. Everything important to these participants fits loosely into one of these three themes. It may be that these themes of connection, creativity, and meaning making reflect the primary themes of what matters in the lives of these young people. The importance of these three themes will be further explored in the following chapter.

Themes

The participants identify six themes of meaning making in their Side By Side experience. These six themes, derived from the data, are frequently referred to in the Youth Leaders' journals and interviews. The six themes are campers, community, mentors, arts and journaling, and challenge. I will describe each of these themes in the Youth Leaders' own words and then draw some conclusions.

1. The Campers (Service)

Kara gives a swim lesson

The service component is a primary purpose of Side By Side and is accomplished by directing an Arts and Environment camp for children. The Youth Leaders anticipate the arrival of the campers with great excitement. Most of the Youth Leaders come to Side By Side, at least partly, because they want to work with children and make a difference in the children's lives. There are workshops on child development and role-playing about discipline issues, and lots of discussion of schedules and activities, but none of these can truly prepare the Youth Leaders for the arrival of two-dozen energetic, outspoken 8 to 11 year olds. Each Youth Leader is matched up with two campers. For five days the Youth Leaders are responsible around the clock for their campers: for meals, showers, activities, games, journaling, and bedtime and homesickness. It is a significant responsibility and requires a huge outpouring of energy. The campers revel in the attention. The Youth Leaders, on the whole, rise mightily to the challenge. For some it is harder than for others. Each of the Youth Leaders acknowledge that the children had a good time and learned some new things. All but Kara also speak of their own growth in relation to the campers.

- Emily gets right to work and remains steady, reliable, and in quiet good humor. She is always found right next to her campers, cheerful and present.
- Laura is easy to overlook, but she has a tenacity and determination that wins out in the end as she gains confidence in her ability to work with children. The children are wary of her at first, but she engages them in areas where she is confident such as the garden and nature walks.
- Kara quietly goes her way with one or two children always attached to her side. She stays calm and attentive with the children.
- Erin approaches the work with a determined intensity and becomes more skilled as the weeks progressed, though she was generally more interested in her relationships with the other Youth Leaders.
- Brandy seems relaxed, in control, and cheerful. She is often sought out for discipline issues. When you find a laughing and whispering group of campers, there you will find Brandy.
- Katharina has a hard time enjoying any of it. The noise, the high energy, and the seeming chaos are a strain on her. The children quickly sense her disapproval and rigidity, and will have almost nothing to do with her.
- Blythe struggles with the balance between enjoying the children and getting them to follow the schedule and listen to her. Her love of children comes through by the end as she forges a close relationship with one young camper in particular.

Emily: *I saw the confidence drama can give to children. They need opportunities to unlock the talents that will keep them off the streets. I want to do drama and music with inner-city kids.*

Laura: *I feel like the work w/ the children for those two weeks was a good introduction. It's almost like an orientation to being a responsible person, like a parent in a way. You're seeing to the needs of a certain child, or two children. You really have to be observant, be right there and become familiar with them. And hopefully develop a closer relationship than just caretaker. Especially with Shaniqua. She wrote these wonderful song poems. A lot of times it was just me and her and we were throwing a football, one-on-one interacting. We talked about plants and trees.*

Kara: *I really like the kids a lot this year. I like to hear them say they don't want to go home.*

Erin: *I think I've been a positive influence. Some of the youth leaders get carried away and have a certain mentality already that the kids share. Like certain of the guys have the same street mentality that the kids do, which is good in certain ways, but it's also just more of the same for them. So to see someone who just doesn't have that mentality at all, doesn't think that way, like confuse them or con them, I think it's a good thing for them to see. I liked doing the biography part with them, because it opened it up to getting to a relationship other than "I tell you what to do."*

Brandy: *I always want to establish a relationship where it's easy to talk to me. With the children, they really listened to me. I liked being the one they could talk to, being the one they run to when they need help. And at the end when they come to me and say "thank you," that made me feel so good. They don't know how much that meant to me.*

Katharina: *I'm getting a bit frustrated with the children. They are crazy and wild but still street smart. Some of the city kids are so violent they are hardly children any more. They're all so loud and not all the counselors take on their responsibilities*

Blythe: *I like the younger children. The older they are, the harder they are to work with.*

Interacting with the campers elicits a wide variety of rapidly changing responses. At the end, when the play has been performed, the cake eaten, the suitcases packed and the bus loaded up with crying children wanting to give one final hug to their counselor, most of the Youth Leaders feel the satisfaction of a job well-done. Most agree that the children had been given an experience that will not soon be forgotten. And each of the seven Youth leaders are affected by their interactions with the campers.

Erin: *I think the kids loved the camp. This one boy, Tyson, at the end when the parents were there, he said, "come and sit on the wishing rock." He said, "close your eyes and make a wish and put your hand on the rock. My wish is that I could stay here forever."*

2. Mentors

Mentors are now widely acknowledged as an important and significant source of strength and guidance for youth. At Side By Side we have seen how important this relationship can be. At the beginning of the program each Youth Leader is assigned to a staff mentor. They meet at least once a week for an extensive check-in and evaluation. Mentors ask their mentee questions such as: "How are you doing? What do you need? What are your challenges and learning?" The mentor and Youth Leader share observations and insights. They talk about the mentee's future dreams and plans. In follow-up conversations, I am surprised by the number of young people who point out the importance of having this adult listen to them during the summer. This response seems to be true across race and class differences.

Emily: *I realized in the first weekend being mentored, it's nice to have someone there who is for you and behind you.*

Laura: *It was really good to have some time taken out just to be listened to. During some of those moments I was able to talk in ways that I wasn't able to otherwise. The mentoring really provided connection between this experience and the rest of my life. You were willing to meet me in my quest. Here I am 22 yrs old and I don't know what I'm doing. It's helpful to have someone with experience and who is older.*

Erin: *Being mentored and having the whole experience made me want to go into life being mentored. Just having someone else asking the questions, because you can ask yourself, but sometimes you don't ask the right questions.*

Brandy: *It was nice to talk to a mentor. I got so comfortable talking to people when I was there. It was good for me to talk about things that have been bothering me for such a long time and I never got the chance to talk about. It was good to know I had someone to lean on.*

Blythe said that it was good to be guided by an adult.

I noticed that the Youth Leaders all appeared to look forward to the scheduled meeting each week with their mentor. In the months following Side By Side four Youth Leaders expressed the importance of this mentoring connection in their life and the wish that it might continue.

3. Community Connections

Brandy in the dorm with campers

At Side By Side the aim to develop a caring community is primary. The discussions, the sharing, the meals, the laughter, the responsibility are all designed to build community connections at Side By Side. The most powerful tool used at Side By Side to develop community may be the shared biographies. Near the end of the first week, with a spirit of reverence, each participant tells her life story to the group. It is a moving and connecting experience. All of the participants, with the exception of Kara,

speak about their awareness of the Side By Side community that formed and five mention the importance of the shared biographies.

Emily: *I definitely felt very comfortable with the Youth Leaders by the end. Even if we weren't hugging or kissing each other all the time, we definitely had a bond there. We could stand by each other; it felt a lot like a family. It was very comfortable being together and working together. We really understood each other's flaws.*

I think having the kids there was certainly something, because we all had to get along and act like we got along, just to be able to work with the kids. We sort of had to rise above any pettiness we might have. And people who were there really wanted to work hard, to get along with each other; Yeah, with all the gardening, and talking and telling our life stories. I think that connected us.

Laura: *I think in general what developed with the Youth Leaders was a certain level of comfortableness. A change happened where we began to feel like we knew each other beyond appearances and first impressions. There was often just a feeling, when the kids were not around, of playfulness. It wasn't always pleasant because personalities clashed, but there was a respect for one another and the sharing that we had*

I felt like the biographies were really important as far as getting to know one another. because of what we were trying to accomplish, we were trying to get a deeper relationship. The biographies are just essential to that because you find out things about a person's life that are not comfortable maybe to talk about.

Erin: *The community of youth leaders was special. It felt like a very powerful community, like everybody could do something very meaningful with their life. I could think of all of them doing great things. We were given the place to recognize ourselves and the people that were there, and by being able to recognize every other person and each person doing that, a lot of power was built up. I think the program itself and the reflection time made this happen. And the biography was a big part too.*

Brandy: *It feels like a second home to me, and meeting all those different kinds of people and getting to know children, doing all those activities, I really enjoyed myself. The fact that we always had our little discussions, and everyone participated. Everyone listened and they were understanding and comforting also. It's more like a family.*

In the very beginning, I thought people were like in their groups. I noticed the pairs were of the same color: Bernard and Henry. Then I noticed it changed. It was Henry and Zack, me and Blythe, me and Emily. I noticed that and wrote it in my personal diary. It made me happy to see people not staying in their groups. I think if we didn't have the discussions that we did, that those groups would have remained till the end of the program. We wouldn't have been as open; we wouldn't have seen each other the same way as we did before we left. The life stories, the race video that we watched, the discussions that we did, the activities, the roommates. The most inspiring one was the biography sharing. People could relate, "Hey, I didn't know that went on in your life."

Katharina: *I thought the community formed at side By Side was good. Yeah there was still some separation because there was so much diversity, not everyone necessarily gets along. But I don't think anybody really hated each other. I still have a connection with Emily. Blythe kinda tried to stay in touch and wrote me a lot of e-mails. I thought it was very sweet.*

Blythe: *It's been really interesting to hear everybody's stories, because there aren't many black people in my community but there are some. Even if they come from places that aren't like my area, they really do try and fit in. I felt that I was a part of everyone and I liked that.*

4. The Arts and Journaling

In encounters with the arts we can be shaken out of our normal ways and experience new possibilities (Greene, 1995). It is this fresh start with new insights that we aim for at Side By Side. We want the Youth Leaders to make discoveries of each other and of new approaches to life. At Side by Side there is a great deal of emphasis placed on the artistic component of the program. Art work is often produced in the journal and the journal becomes a daily focus as it is becomes a repository of artistic exercises and ongoing reflections. The journal becomes a powerful tool for growth, reflection and community building at Side By Side. The impact of the arts and journal are mentioned by each of the seven women.

Blythe, Brandy, Laura and Emily speak of the impact of the arts on the children.

Emily: *I really recognize how art can change lives. I've always felt stupid sending money to groups that bring art into "the ghetto" when people are starving, but now I see art can have such a positive impact on a child's life.*

Brandy: *Last week when we did the mural, watching them all just working together, you know, agreeing, just painting all together. It was magical. They were happy and very interested and into the work. Their faces glowed after they finished and realized what a wonderful job they did. It turned out so beautiful. That made me so proud of them.*

Erin speaks of the impact of the arts and storytelling on everyone while Blythe and

Brandy mentions the personal impact of the arts.

Blythe: *I always knew there was an artistic part of me, I just didn't do it often enough.*

Brandy: *Side By Side gave me the chance to express myself artistically.*

Laura, Blythe, and Katharina continue to journal at home.

Katharina: *I keep journaling. It's so wonderful. It's put such a different light to journaling. I have a lot of art in my journals. I put in quotes, poems that I like, sketches, watercolor paintings, colored pencil. I write about things. Like Sept 11th.*

Laura: *That first week got us into the habit. I tried to continue it. I'm always journaling. It's always part of my life. Especially since August. I think that I'm really thankful for that kind of push. I also enjoyed seeing what other people were doing in their journals. Even if someone is not as practiced or passionate about it, I mean there were varying degrees... Kara was so passionate*!

Brandy and Katharina notice an increased awareness and inspiration that come out of the

journaling and artistic work.

Brandy: *Side By Side gave me the chance to express myself artistically. Yes, the art inspired me most. Me and Emily had to draw pictures together and me and her saw things that were the same. In the end it ended up with a beautiful landscape of a beautiful sun, flowers and mountains. And it was two different people seeing the same things.*

Katharina: *I suppose it made me more aware that everybody's an artist! Even though I knew that, I never really thought of myself so much of an artist.*

One young man in the program is extremely hesitant to draw. At first he repeatedly reiterates that he is not an artist. By the middle of the program he is drawing in his journal during every free moment.

As you might be able to surmise simply from the pictures taken from the various journals included here, the journals themselves are evidence of the impact of the arts. The beauty and depth of the journals continually amaze the staff and the Youth Leaders.

5. Diversity and Racism

A stated purpose of Side By Side is to build a community founded on diversity and understanding. There is a great deal of effort placed on bringing together a diverse group of Youth Leaders, black and white, rich and poor, city and country, male and female. The first week is spent exploring some of these differences. The exploration of race is often the most dramatic and disturbing. After a few days of getting-to-know-each other exercises the film, *Twilight* (Smith, 1995), about the 1992 L.A. riots, is shown. This is followed by an animated and impassioned conversation where the young men of color relate story after story of their own experiences of racism. The next day we hve a visiting Undoing Racism trainer lead us in a workshop.

There are some clear differences in the reactions. Most of the white Youth Leaders are shocked, stunned, and even tearful following the film. They feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges dramatized (actual news footage of the riots are used in *Twilight*) and therefore experience feelings of sorrow and hopelessness. Many wish everyone would be kind and just get along.

Erin: *The movie was discouraging. It made no positive statements about there being no hope for the situation ...but it certainly did not leave me feeling hopeful. I wasn't sure what to think about the movie last night ... but this morning thoughts have been popping into my head a lot—memories of certain scenes. It was almost too much to take in last night.*

After seeing the film, the white Youth Leaders begin to get an idea of the extent and pervasiveness of the issues of racism and inequality. During the discussion following the film they remain mostly quiet. The film's issues became real when they hear the young men, whom they already consider to be friends, relating their own experiences of racial profiling. Laura is weeping and repeats that she did not understand.

Emily: *I was ashamed to be white and watching that.*

Laura: *It's so complicated, and I really didn't understand a lot of what I saw. The idea of white privilege was one that I kinda took for granted. I hadn't really digested or really taken in that understanding. The way that it is part of society. Indeed my mind was expanded for trying to understand what that means -and I'm still trying to grasp that. I didn't know anything about it. I feel I just learned little pieces of what happened there and what that meant for blacks and other races. That was something I had not known about at all.*

Katharina: I feel e*mbarrassment, disgust with white prejudice. My eyes have been opened to another world, a world of mistrust, anger, oppression, fear of what is around. A world where <u>the</u> cops (not our cops) are the enemy. They cannot be trusted or relied upon. I never quite knew how much it was present. You hear about it as if it were not really; but now stories of people right in front of me of anger built up, of hate and mistrust.*

The film does not surprise the black Youth Leaders. They say that it is nothing new, but they are angry. They are pleased to be heard by the group and feet validated by having their experiences with prejudice witnessed.

Kara: *I'm going to start by saying simply this anger. They showed the Rodney King beating and it hurt. It made me hate. Honestly I hated white people for that moment. I couldn't bring myself to cry although that's exactly what I was feeling.*

Brandy: ***Twilight*** *was a very devastating movie and violent. The things that I saw inside the movie was no shock to me because everyday I am exposed to violence. I was really sad to watch it, just ANGRY, because just the fact in order to receive justice, you have to react in a violent manner. In* Twilight, *how they handled the situation, that kinda made us look bad. We go up there and we're ruining everything because we can't have our way. At the same time, that kinda made me feel like the only way we could get through to somebody was if I burned your building down. You gotta take matters in your own hands sometimes.*

The male Youth Leaders of color do most of the talking. They give many examples of their day to day experiences of racial profiling. As a community we are able to hear them out, to witness it and work it through together. This is not easy work. One conversation follows:

Kara: *It's like when I walk into a store with my girls or something like that, and they constantly stare at me. I don't care, as long as they don't approach me, put their hands on me.*
Male*: That's what it is. You can go into a store and they assume customers are stealing from them. You have to fit a profile to be a criminal. I mean there's always the issue of racial profiling, black man on the road and all that...*
Brandy*: It's frustrating though. It was me and a whole bunch of my boys and we went to store. And like 6 of them, they purple they so dark. It was so quiet in the store, they staring at you.*

The Youth Leaders are generally more hopeful when speaking about the diversity of the Side By Side community that had formed. There is some awareness of the efforts people in the group are making to learn and understand, and some awareness of the importance of being heard.

Erin: *Well in the beginning it felt like there was a real divide [between the races]. It felt uncomfortable at first. As we got to know each other and I got to know Brandy and Kara, I found out I actually had more in common with them than with some of the white people who were there. At the end it was the whole typical thing; at the beginning you see color, at the end you see people. I definitely learned more about racial issues. There aren't many black people in my town.*

Laura works hard to understand the various viewpoints and feels that she learned a great deal. "*There's so much going on in my mind right now, but I want to be able to share the other side of*

those stories. It's really, really hard to find an opportunity like this to break those barriers down, even though I've been so willing

Brandy*: The day we did Twilight, I realized there are a lot of people who are uneducated about the fact that there is racism that goes on. It kinds hurts me. Everyone should know. By me living in Detroit, D is found to be the most segregated city in the country. Laura for instance really tested me. She wasn't educated about black people. She never really encountered them. It kinda bothered me. I also appreciated that she was trying to learn. A lot of people see it and ignore it. But she really wanted to step in and take some kind of action. And that really touched me.*

Katharina: *That was kinda a shock to me, the violence in the communities. Especially with Brandy, she's such a sweetheart and she's been through so much. I think it's given me a better understanding of things, of life.*

In the end, the support of a community that allows differences and strives for justice elicits an upbeat optimism. It appears that some of the hope generated comes from the willingness to witness each other's stories and the chance for each Youth Leader to be heard.

Laura: *The other moment I remember was during the talks we had about racism. Anthony said that he had never had white people listen to him like this.*

Brandy: *I didn't really see race as a factor* [in the Side By Side group]. *I just saw them as people. It was more like people coming together and helping each other, and being one. I didn't feel intimidated, inferior, or superior*

Emily: *I finally realized what a different world it is for people who were black and not well off. But at the same time I felt that I had a lot more in common with the children that I would have expected. I don't need to fear that I am a racist when I notice the difference between me and the black guy on the corner. So I try to see people for themselves and their individuality.*

Laura: I feel really inspired. I'm doing this time here with all of you, I'm going to be giving just through my actions...I'll be given an open door to start to work with racism in my own life. Because I have a long way to go.

It is not possible to resolve the issues of racism during a summer program. What is possible is to give people a direct experience and a chance to process that experience. The Youth Leaders show a willingness to work on these hard issues together and seem to emerge with a greater understanding and some level of optimism concerning the issue of racism.

6. Challenges and changes

Emily and Brandy leaving the garden with campers

Side By Side is designed to be a challenging program. The staff believes that challenges and struggle can lead to growth and even transformation. Nevertheless, the staff frequently debates the issue of responsibility and workload. When is too much expected from the participants? They are expected to act as leaders, but receive guidance and assistance from the staff. They are expected to be individuals, yet to bond as a community, to be self-disclosing, but maintain their own identity. Is the challenge enough to be significant and generate a transformation, but not too much to discourage and overwhelm? The work is hard, the hours long; they are on almost constant duty with demanding and emotional interactions. All the participants face these challenges; some of them feel certain challenges more than others. Confronting racism and diversity present some of the challenges, but there are also other issues such as gender tensions, fatigue, and issues of equity. One challenge common to all the Youth Leaders was their interaction with the campers. All of the participants speak of the challenge of the children, though all but Katharina find this to be a mostly enjoyable challenge. The experiences with the campers are discussed in the camper section of this chapter.

For Katharina the campers pose a particularly difficult challenge. The first week her assigned child does not stay with her at all and she has minimal interactions with any of the children. The children do not choose to be with her mostly because she was no fun. She is too strict, too angry, and I think they sense her judgmental attitude. Katharina makes many assumptions, such as the children being violent, perhaps because she has no inner-city experience.

Katharina: *I'm getting a bit frustrated with the children. I can't just walk away. Sometimes I just want to go to my room and read. They are crazy and wild but still street smart. Some of the city kids are so violent they are hardly children any more. They're all so loud and not all the counselors take on their responsibilities. It's hard work!*

She demands a higher level of discipline, order, and quiet than the other Youth Leaders and is often dissatisfied with the campers' behavior.

Katharina: *Friday at about 6 in the morning Emily and Brandy were woken up by the boys running through the girls' floor knocking on their doors. Then the girls went into different rooms – it was a mess. At about 7:30 AM Nikki and Eggy got into a big fight which Brandy had to break up. Finally at 7:40 the rest of the counselors were woken up to take care of all their children. A wild morning! I got pissed at the children but I got through it*

The second week is more productive and satisfying for Katharina especially after she has a personal success with the children.

Katharina: *Working with the children, when I'm caught in the moment, I thought, "Oh this stuff is hard. I don't really want to be here some of the time. I just want it to be over!" The really memorable thing for me with the children is that walk I did. I tell you, when I got the six of them to come with me, it was just great. They started asking "are we gonna take a walk tomorrow?"*

Erin experiences angry resentment about the hard work and the financial issues. In Side By Side low income Youth Leaders are paid to attend the summer program by one of our partnering community organizations. When Erin discovers that some of the Youth Leaders are paid to attend the program and she is not paid even though she is

working hard, she is overwhelmed with resentment that this is not fair. This leads to a group discussion about privilege and opportunity. She spends the middle week consumed by this issue and does a lot of grumbling with a few other Youth Leaders when she attempts to draw into her complaints.

Erin*: Last week was horrible for me. An unexpected shock. I was really upset. Part of it was I didn't feel I was getting enough out of what I was doing, that it was too hard. No appreciation from staff, children or other youth leaders. Just a lot of work for nothing. Last week it seemed that the whole community thing that we built, it wasn't there.*

For others it is about the differences in responsibility, an issue connected this year with gender. The seven male Youth Leaders tend to be more laidback: sometimes sitting back as observers and sometimes coming late to activities. One recurring issue is responsibility.

Blythe, whose thinking and words move slowly, has a blow-up with Henri, the handsome, wild, freestyle wordsmith of the group. Henri often stretches the rules of timeliness that Blythe holds so important. In fact Henri is almost always late to each activity. The argument between Blythe and Henri is about punctuality and schedules.

Blythe: *Henri was saying that he thought everything should start at 10:30 in the morning so people could sleep in more. And I didn't like that idea at all. And then I was saying I don't have sympathy for people who stay up late and then are tired the next day. And Henri was just saying it's not that people don't want to go to bed early, it's that they can't go to bed early. And all of a sudden, it just came out like "you can go to hell!" I really didn't mean it, it just came out. He's so good with his words! It makes me mad. It takes me forever to think what to say and he's like – snap - like that, and he has all his words he needs to say out.*

Blythe is not the only female youth leader who feels that she takes more day-to-day responsibility than some of the male Youth Leaders do. It bothers a few of them. In addition, some of the female Youth Leaders are inhibited in their interactions with the male Youth

Leaders.

Katharina: *I wish the other Youth Leaders* (male*) would take more initiative for their own children.*

Laura*: Well being female was kinda hard. In terms of how we could care for the children. The guys were more lenient, and the girls were more stern. The males would try and tell the females that "you can't tell a guy what to do" and the guys were often off in their own world. When I looked at the guys, it looked like it was harder for them to control the children because they spent so much time trying to be friends with the children they weren't being the role models for them. When they did try to tell them what to do, it was like, "Who are you? You're my friend."*

Youth Leaders also face their own inner challenges. Kara's challenge is her depression and inability to sleep. Sleep is an oft-cited concern, usually because many of the Youth Leaders stay up too late, happy to talk into the early hours of the morning. Blythe is isolated, unable to connect with other Youth Leaders. Emily is shy and soft-spoken and therefore can be overlooked by both Youth Leaders and campers. Most of the Youth Leaders are very nervous during the first day of the program. Brandy speaks about her fears in the beginning.

Brandy: *I had a hard time in the beginning. The first week when we had our discussions, I had a hard time opening up. I'm not really an open person and it was the first time I was in a small group like discussing something like that. I was kinda scared, and it was new for me. So at first I was like, "well I'm not gonna share." One word answers, yes/no.*

During this summer another challenge is presented. One of the most troubling incidents in the history of Side By Side occurs with Katharina, a seventeen year old, white Youth Leader from a protected white Waldorf School community in Boulder, Colorado and Bernard, at 22, the oldest male youth leader, a black man from the south. Early in the first week, Bernard propositions Katharina. He asks if she will sleep with him saying he has never slept with a white woman and wants to try it. It turns out he has already tried this approach on another Youth Leader and one junior staff who both quickly dismiss him and say nothing. Katharina reacts

strongly, tells him no, and reports it to the staff, though she asks us not to tell him. He never bothers her again, but this incident shapes her experience to some extent. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Bernard is not really interested in the program and his participation is minimal at best. Much of the resentment about lack of participation comes from Bernard's actions. He is always late and often disinterested. It turns out that he came to the program as a chance to get to New York City for his music. It is not until he arrives that he discovers that we are forty miles away from New York City and he has only one free day. With mutual agreement, he leaves after the second week.

This incident raises many issues about race and sex – both emotional topics. Would Katharina have reacted so strongly if she had been propositioned by a white man? My speculation is that she would have turned him down, been a little flattered, and that is as far as it would go. I question the staff's handling of this problem. The rules are clear: no pairing off and no sexual activity during the summer program. This is explained in the beginning along with the other rules. This incident also reinforces the need for a strong male of color on our staff.

Based on this incident Katharina and Erin, two young, attractive white girls, come to their own conclusions about racial stereotypes. Unfortunately the staff does not face these conclusions more directly.

Erin: *There are a lot of gender and racial stereotypes. And that's another thing I'm finding out, a lot of stereotypes for different cultures are true. They obviously don't go for everybody, but in some cases they can be said. And the stereotype of black males being very promiscuous, I saw some truth to that. It was a challenge, but I felt I was able to hold my own and not be intimidated by it.*

Katharina: *I see that and recognize how our society discriminates. Like for a black guy to have a white girl is such a big score. For me, it just hadn't been such a reality.*

The challenges of the Side By Side program are considerable and varied. Some Youth

Leaders do seem to be changed by the experience. These changes are easier for the participants to see with hindsight

Changes

There are some dramatic changes that can be seen by the staff within the time of the Program while others set in later, after the Youth Leaders go home and reflect on their experiences.

Erin: *It took awhile for it to sink in, but then I wished it could go on for ever. It was a pivotal experience – it transformed me.*

Brandy: *I was shy at first, but when other people started to open up, that released a lot of stress and tension I had inside. All it takes is that one person who says, "Well, I'll go first." You just follow the leader; you see the response of someone else. And when you had something personal to say, they didn't say negative things. They were positive about it, and they told you their opinions, it wasn't a put-down.*

Laura: *My feeling for Jason changed completely. I saw him as a warm human being, and really compassionate. There was no way I could see that in the beginning. I thought, "Oh he's not very interested in what we're doing. He's just being skeptical or cynical and half-heartedly going along." I think he expressed that he changed though as we went along. He became really active and caring. There was a time he came up to me and was like, "so you really do feel something for what we're talking about?" He really wanted to know that it was sincere feeling.*

I have found that challenge and change are often connected. It is my belief that challenge is necessary for change and transformation to occur.

The response of the participants to each theme is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants who responded to the themes							
Data Themes	**Emily**	**Laura**	**Kara**	**Erin**	**Brandy**	**Katharina**	**Blythe**
Campers	1	2	1	2	2	1	2
Mentors	1	2	0	1	1	1	1
Community	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
Arts and Journaling	1	2	1	0	2	2	2
Diversity and Racism	2	2	1	2	2	1	2
Challenges	1	2	1	2	1	2	2

Key:

0 – no references
1 - one or two references
2 – frequent references

Meaning Making and the Side By Side Experience

What is going on here? In the middle of the summer, during humid ninety-eight degree heat waves when smart people are on the beach sipping ice tea, people at Side By Side are working 14-hour days for little to no pay. The staff keeps returning year after year; the Youth Leaders want to come back as junior staff; the foundations are funding the program. What keeps it all going? I would propose that the possibility of a life changing impact of Side By Side is all the promotion that is needed. When the Youth Leaders and the staff are able to make meaning and find purpose in the experience, a short summer program becomes a transformational encounter. This is not always true, not always permanent, and not always remarkable, but it happens.

Brandy, Laura, Blythe, Katharina, Erin, and Emily all cite the interaction with a diverse group as being pivotal. Laura and Emily and Erin also mention increased confidence in their own abilities.

Brandy: *These weeks were so much more that I could ever imagine. Side by Side allowed me to interact with people of different backgrounds and ages.*

During the time I spent with the children I realized how much of an influence I had on them so some of my bad habits had to change. The experience here made me want to work with kids even more.

Katharina: *Side by Side has made me more open and tolerant and aware of the issues of race that some deal with daily.*

Laura: *I wanted the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people and confront things I would not ordinarily get the chance to. I am working on feeling comfortable with being myself in different groups. The structure of Side by Side automatically did that. I learned that people of color are not all just black, they are diverse races. I am starting to believe it may not be as hard to find real interaction as I thought. Interaction conducted with respect and real listening is what breaks barriers. This is what I saw in practice here."*

It marked the time I spent deeply engaged in sharing and listening with peers that were diverse and from different backgrounds. It was really needed in my life. I feel it marked a time of transition in my life. It helped me to become more aware of how relationships work with people.

Laura and Kara focus on their own growth through their work with the campers.

Laura: *What really came out of my time here is my direction in life. I learned that yes, I'm Ok. I can work with kids. I'm strong enough to do it.*

Kara: *I came here again this year because I wanted to be better with the kids. I was more energetic and more positive. It all worked out.*

Katharina has her versions of meaning from "helping" the children.

Katharina: *I'm definitely glad I did it. It's such a great opportunity for these children. It's a lot of work and a lot to do, but it's so rewarding. It was a really good learning experience for me. I suppose my view of the world just got bigger through this experience. Just in terms of living in Boulder, it's kinda sheltered. And the kids that I'm around, they don't grow up nearly as fast. It's interesting to really see that and see what some of these children deal with on an everyday basis. Makes me so glad for the life I've been given. Not to say that I didn't have difficult times, but I think I have a great appreciation for what I have. . I definitely love the program and helping these children like that.*

Emily speaks about increased confidence and continuing to work with community service.

Emily: *I can't put my finger on it. Yes I do feel different; I feel more confident because I feel like what I did was pretty cool. And now going off to Vassar too, I feel there's the whole Poughkeepsie community that needs a lot of help. I feel very comfortable going out there knowing that I'll be able to do something. I definitely hope to continue this work*

Erin is a good illustration of the importance of struggle and the need for challenge.

Despite (or because of) her anger during the mid-point of the program she undergoes a distinct

life change after returning home. She speaks with some surprise about it.

Erin: *Yeah, I feel different. It was just a pivotal experience I guess. I feel more in control of my life I have a clearer sense that I can go and do something. I can get myself out into the world and find out what is going on.*

The group things and also the workshops activities that we did, the reflection time and the biography these all did something. To do stuff uninhibited in front of people I don't know, isn't an experience I'd never had before. To not know the people at all or how they were going to think of me, and not really care and have to be myself in the end.

Laura, in her introspective manner is already looking at how the things she worked on at Side by Side continue to impact her life. She speaks of connections.

Laura: *I continued to really think a lot about what I experienced and issues that we talked about at Side By Side. I continue to ask the people around me how can you be involved in the world, and how as artists do you try to mix with a diverse world?*

I really see that time of connections w/ people at Side by Side as a milestone. It was a marker to recognizing that I had a lot to learn from people that were different than me.

Brandy 's clear vision and levelheaded approach give us a good overview of the significance of diversity and community for making meaning..

Brandy: *In the beginning, I didn't really feel like I fit in too much. Like, "maybe I shouldn't be here." Gradually I started to receive much love from everybody. In the end I felt, "maybe I shouldn't leave." They made me feel comfortable about who I am and how I am. I really want to say thank-you because it made me a better person. I came back home and it's easier for me to talk to all different kinds of people now.*

What was very inspiring was that Side By Side, it was very diverse. I love being around lots of different people. So when you see people of a different culture, you understand maybe certain things they do, their attitudes, how they speak. My mind was open a lot more after I left Side By Side.

There appears to be a considerable amount of meaning making in this program. The rich variety of activities and interactions gives the Youth Leaders many opportunities to make meaning. So finally, the question must be asked, does the impact of the program stay with them? It seems, from the vantage point we have now gained, that some effect of the changes may remain as part of many of the girls' lives. Of course it is hard to say that the connections to service, meaning, social action, and awareness are due to Side By

Side. Some could be due to self-selection or to the developmental process of growing up. The young women who come to this kind of program are more disposed to be involved in civic action. Some of the positive results could be due to wanting to please the researcher and be helpful. However, according to the girls themselves, from their follow-up interviews, Side By Side changed them significantly.

We can get glimpses of this on-going change if we look at what they did next.

- Emily: Finished High school and applied early admission to Vassar where she is now working in a community service program with underserved children using the Side By Side Journal curriculum. She returns to attend Side By Side community workshops during the year.
- Laura: Side By Side placed Laura as an intern at Camp Hill, a residential program for handicapped people. She worked with the adults and then signed up for a second internship after she transfers to work the children.
- Kara: Went to college part time. We are still looking for her. She has disappeared from all of us at Side By Side and from the Detroit community. Her e-mail and cell phone and mother's phone are no longer in service.
- Erin: She asked us to place her in a service internship. She went to Sophia House, a home for homeless families in San Francisco and tutored the children. She loved it and signed up to work three more months. The staff at Sophia house praise Erin's work. Now she is a freshman at Antioch College.
- Brandy: Finished high school and goes to Michigan University where she is studying to become a doctor. She stays in touch and works with children in the

summer. She wants to come back to side By Side but her college orientation program interfered.

- Katharina: She went home to finish High School and apply to college in Colorado where she continues to pursue her dancing and intends to become a teacher.
- Blythe: Blythe is at home being a nanny for a neighboring family.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the data from the experience of seven Youth Leaders. There were many commonalities found in their Side By Side experience. There were also many intriguing differences. Upon close examination of the data strong indications of meaning making have emerged. Some of these aspects of meaning making will be explored in more depth for youth in general and for youth programs in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Description of Activities

In this study my goal is to present a fully rounded picture of each youth leader. To that end, I use their own words. These are found throughout the presentation of data. The Youth Leaders' words appear in italics. These words are taken from the observations the Youth Leaders wrote in the journals, their response to interview questions, and the transcript of the group sessions that are held with Side By Side staff and other Youth Leaders. Since I am a staff member at Side By Side during the entire program, I weave my own observations into each case study.

There are many exercises and activities that provide food for dialogue and reflection during the Side By Side program. Many of the participants' comments are derived from these activities. The sources of information that will be referred to in the following case studies are first described in these activities.

1. Who Am I
This is an introduction exercise that takes place on the day the Youth Leaders arrive. A Polaroid picture is taken of each of them and after putting it in their clean white journals they begin to circulate in the room. Each Youth Leader comes up with a question to ask, such as, "what music do you like", or "how many siblings do you have", or "Where would you like to be right now?" They ask everyone a question and write it in each youth leader's journal.

2. Self portrait Drawing
Each Youth Leader is asked to draw a self-portrait in her own journal on the second day. This can be representational or symbolic. They are not looking in a mirror. The portrait can be drawn with pastels, pencils, and they can also use collage techniques. It can also include words or representations of things that are important to them. At the end of the drawing everyone returns to the circle and introduces their portrait to the group. This exercise is later done with the campers.

3. Intention

Each Youth Leader is asked to write what their intention is for these weeks at Side By Side. They are asked to think about why they came, what they want to give, and what they hope to get out of the experience. At the end they are asked to speak about how they met or did not meet their stated intentions or how those intentions might have changed.

4. Conversation in Color

Another exercise used in Side by Side is *A Conversation in Color*. This is a collaborative activity in which two participants use pastels to draw a picture together in silence with no planning. The Youth Leaders are asked to pair with someone they do not yet know well. First they draw together in one journal and then in the other one's journal. The pair then talks about what happened. Was someone in charge? Did they take turns or go together? Did they have different styles? This is a dynamic, interactive experience of relating to another. When the campers come, the Youth Leaders do Conversation in Color with them.

5. Biography sharing

Shared narrative biographies are a compelling tool for building community and developing identity. All the youth leaders tell their own life story. This is done with ceremony. A safe, decorating the room and entering in silence create reverent space. Individuals are asked to reflect on events that have shaped their lives by looking for patterns and people that have influenced them. This introspection awakens the questions: "Who am I?" and "What is my destiny on earth?"

Our own stories define our voice, deepen our connections (Gilligan et al, 1991) and help us to understand our destiny (Schumacher, 1997). They connect the outer work of learning to the inward journey of growth and the community of others to the potential of the self. By sharing biographies we build bridges of understanding and connection, develop tolerance for others, and gain insight into our own path.

At Side By Side the almost sacred activity of sharing life stories is vivid proof that we are all on a common journey. There are numerous benefits to a community of diversity that come through this ceremony of shared narrative biographies. These benefits include a growing confidence, an increased understanding of self and others, and an opportunity to change.

The stories make common threads explicit and differences in opinion and perspective apparent. Participants are generally emotional, honest, and perceptive. The empathy is palpable. In the process of witnessing each story the group moves to a deeper level of commitment and respect.

6. Commandments[1]

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[1] Thanks to Chris Schaefer

This is a thoughtful and often revealing activity. The Youth Leaders are asked to think of the commandments or expectations, both spoken and unspoken, that they were raised with in their home. They write them down using *thou shall* and *thou shall* not. After everyone is finished writing they go around the circle and share each list. Then they discuss which ones they will keep and which they will change when they create their own households. We see some interesting cultural and personal differences.

7. Qualities and The Wizard[2]

This is an exercise that allows everyone to be silly and brings out the showmen and women in the group. Everyone pairs up with someone that they have not yet gotten to know. One person of each pair must become the wizard and the other is a shopper. The wizard sets up shop and the shopper arrives to buy a quality from the wizard. It must be something that they need and they must pay for it with a quality that they have in excess. We have a big box of hats and wigs and dress-up clothes and anything in the room can be used as props.

8. These I have Loved[3]

I am always aware of the importance of writing literacy in the lives of young people. Writing is often the most effective form of reflection. We do a great deal of writing in the journals. The poem I have used, ***These I Have Loved*** by Rubert Brooke has had some strong results. I read them the poem and ask them to compose their own. When they are done we go around the circle a few times with each person reading one line from their poem.

9. Free write

This is a traditional writing practice. We use it to lessen fears about writing and to get the words flowing in their journals. Usually I will give them a beginning phrase or sentence and then ask them to write without concern for spelling, punctuation, complete sentences, or even for what they are saying … just to keep their pen moving. After 12 minutes or so of writing I ask if anyone will share what she wrote. The group is often stunned by the beauty and even power of the words.

10. Group Poem

This writing begins with a phrase[4] such as: *I once was --- but now I am---* or *I wish I were --- then I would---*. The Youth Leaders each write a 2-line stanza in their own journal and then pass it to the left. The next person must read it and continue the poem staying true to the intent and feeling of the beginning. At the end people are handed their own journal back with a complete poem.

11. Continuum

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[2] Thanks to the Prilly Sanville and her Arts and Multicultural Class at Lesley U.

[3] ***These I have Loved*** by Rupert Brooke

[4] Thanks to Natalie Goldman for many phrases

This is a high-energy game that leads into dialogue. A card with a large YES is placed on a chair on one side of the room and a card with NO is placed on the other side of the room. Between the chairs is an invisible line, on which each Youth Leader is to stand in response to their level of agreement with a particular statement. A series of statements are then read. Some examples are:

- A woman should be able to receive an abortion if she so chooses.
- It is acceptable for teenagers to have sex.
- Bill Gates deserves to make 45 million a day.
- Gay couples should be able to adopt… get married.

After many statements and re-arrangements on the continuum, with laughter and groans, we pick one topic that had a wide variety of positioning to discuss together.

12. Twilight

A stated purpose of Side By Side is to build a community founded on diversity and understanding. There is a great deal of effort extended in bringing together an interracial group of Youth Leaders, black, white, as well rich and poor, city and country, male and female. The first week is spent exploring some of these differences. The exploration of race is often the most dramatic and disturbing. The Anna Deveare Smith film, *Twilight,* is shown one evening. This is a one-woman show where Deveare, after hundreds of hours of interviews, plays about a dozen people who were involved in the 1992 LA Riots. Twilight is fast-moving and disturbing. An impassioned conversation and then journal writing follow the viewing.

13. Self-Assessments

Side By Side is a leadership program and self-assessment, examining your own progress and needs, is a useful tool in leadership development. It is an element of the reflection component. When the self-assessment is shared with a mentor or the entire group it becomes even more revealing and significant.

After the first week of working with the campers, the Youth Leaders are asked to write a self-assessment about what they learned, and what they would like to do differently in the coming week.

At the very end of the program, there is an ending circle. At that time each Youth Leader reads her initial intention back to the group and explains how she did or did not achieve it or how the intention itself might have changed.

13. What is Important to me[5]

Each Youth Leader is asked to draw a large circle in her journal. They then divided the circle into eight sections. One thing that is important to them is placed in each section. They can then take one section and draw a second, smaller circle, and fill in each of those eight sections with what is important.

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[5] Thanks to Lin Murphy

14. Elders and mentors

Since Side By Side is a Leadership Program we feel it is important that the Youth Leaders are exposed to inspired leaders from the surrounding community. We want to expose them to dynamic activists who are working in the world to make a difference. We invite speakers to join the group for dinner and an evening discussion. Some of the "elders" who visited the summer of 2001 are:

a. Stella Mars – The Director of The Martin Luther King Center
b. Imam - The spiritual leader of the Spring Valley Mosque
c. Mike Stewart– A juvenile prison worker who grew up on the streets of Oakland, CA.
d. Richard Emory - A Civil Rights Attorney in NYC
e. Peter Glassman – Director of a Conflict Resolution and Mediation Center

15. Youth Leader evening meetings

The group meets together each evening to review the day. A Youth Leader leads this meeting with a rotating staff member in attendance. Youth leaders discuss their interactions with the campers and provide helpful tips for each other. They know there is time each day for commiserating and sharing successes and frustrations amid lots of laughter. By allowing each member of the community to grow as an individual, the well-facilitated reflection period enriches the community as a whole.

16. Staff Meetings

The staff meets twice a week in scheduled meetings, and daily, in unscheduled moments for updates and problem solving. Though logistics and crisis sometimes come into play in these meetings, their primary purpose is to discuss how the Youth Leaders and staff are doing and what is needed. The staff will do a mentor study where each full-time staff member reports on the Youth Leaders they are mentoring. Other staff members will share their observation about that Youth Leader. In this way, a more complete picture of the Youth Leader is developed with a growing clarity of how they can be assisted to grow.

These activities will be referred to in many of the following case studies.

Chapter Eight

Making Meaning

> Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
> the world offers itself to your imagination,
> calls to you over like the wild geese, harsh and exciting,
> over and over announcing your place
> in the family of things.
> (Oliver, 1986, p. 14)

Can we support today's adolescents and encourage them to be "prisoners of hope" (West, 1993)? Can we help young people become conscientious citizens and dynamic leaders? Many adolescents on the verge of being overwhelmed by the meaninglessness they perceive in their lives, long for a positive part to play in addressing the challenges of our world. "Deprived of opportunities for genuine productivity, lured into consumptive roles, young people come to believe that their lives make little difference to the world" (Brendtro, 1990, p.29). They can make a difference and they do have a "place in the family of things."

I want to explore how meaning is made and understood in order to develop a model of meaning making which is reasonable and replicable. If those of us who are working with young people can construct a foundation of meaning upon which they can draw, we must develop it from many sources: our leadership community, our houses of worship, our neighborhoods, our landscapes, our culture, and from within ourselves.

After looking at the seven young women's processes of making meaning for themselves in the previous chapters, I would like to explore the implications of meaning

making for young people in general and for the youth programs in which they may participate. Though my research has been focused on adolescent girls, I believe many of the implications about meaning making apply more generally to young people as a group.

By approaching meaning making from an ecological systems approach I will explore a matrix of meaning making that I have developed from the literature searches and from my own experiences. I will then relate meaning making to youth programs and finally, to conclude, I will look at the meaning making from a developmental perspective.

A Ecological Systems Approach to Meaning Making

Whether we are seeking to understand a business or a youth program, in systems thinking we need to approach the whole in a process that integrates rather than differentiates, and looks for well being rather than dysfunction. In systems thinking we recognize that the ideas and actions of each individual influence the whole system. A living system is a "never resting structure that constantly seeks its own renewal" (Jantsch quoted in Wheatley, 1999, p. 20)

> Systems are understood as whole systems, and attention is given to *relationship within those networks.* ...When we view systems from this perspective, we enter an entirely new landscape of connection, of phenomena that cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect, or explained by studying the parts as isolated contributors. We move into a land where it becomes critical to sense the constant workings of dynamic processes, and then to notice how these processes materialize as visible behaviors and forms.
>
> (Wheatley, 1999, pp. 10-11)

Physicist David Bohm believed that thinking that things exist separately is an illusion that can lead to conflict and confusion. To overcome this illusion we must bring

in new connected ways of knowing, and then critically reflect on them, and decide which ideas and actions to use and which to eliminate. This reflection encourages the vision to evolve, to be shared, and to be used in relationships. Reflection with interaction creates a place where people are growing and expanding their understanding as they continually shape their future together (Senge, 1990). This is the kind of place where meaning making can thrive.

The components of Side by Side flow into, strengthen, and affect each other and it is in the integration of the whole that the meaning emerges. Meaning making happens when balance and integration exists (Bloom, 1997). An appreciation of systems thinking makes it clear why we cannot break Side By Side into its separate parts to fully understand what happens in the program. We will now turn to the actual components of a meaning making system. In exploring this matrix of meaning making bear in mind that the boundaries are permeable and flowing and the system is a whole.

Matrix of meaning making

In the matrix of meaning making, we can picture a five-pointed star demonstrating five facets of meaning making: purpose, creativity, making a difference, resilience, and reflection. Though all five may not be present at all times, these five facets may make up a system of meaning making. The five-pointed star exists within a circle of spirit and/or faith and is surrounded by four elements conducive to meaning making: safety, mentors, community, and challenge. The following chart illustrates this.

Table 5

The Matrix of Meaning Making

Spirit and Faith

"In contemporary American society, institutional support for a young persons spirituality is weak, just at the time when his or her need for spirituality is greater then it was in early generations" (Elkind in Coles, 1995, 93).

I have come to believe that meaning making usually involves some sense of spirit or faith, and that young people are often looking to explore these areas. Paul Tillich believed that the courage to live an empowered, authentic life is founded on the premise that life itself is meaningful and this meaning can only be found when we have discovered our relationship with "the ground of being"(Tillich, 1956). We can call the "ground of being" a spiritual connection that serves as the foundation of meaning making. From his studies of well being and spirituality, Lesley University professor Jared

Kass concludes that experiences of one's spiritual core or one's "ground of being" can lead to stress reduction, healthier behaviors, and greater happiness, and that these experiences can be developed in everyday life (Kass, 1999).

The concept of faith can be used more broadly than in the religious context to include all meaning making that is based on a belief in the possibility of human goodness or the possibility of a higher power. Faith is "a capacity to live at a more than mundane level, to see, to act, to feel, in terms of a transcendent dimension" (Park, 1986, p. 213). By "transcendent," I believe we mean a belief in a quality that cannot be empirically observed, measured, or examined. It may be a felt sense of relation between self, other, and a center of power. It may be involvement in action that takes one out of the realm of personal concerns. Some people are able to find faith in an organized religious context; others may find it in the arts, while some find it in nature, or in an impassioned purpose. This type of spirituality is more synonymous with the way I use the terms "faith" and "spirit" in this chapter.

> Faith is not always religious in its content or context. Faith is a person or group's way of moving into the force field of life. It is our way of finding coherence in a giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives. Faith is a person's way of seeing him-or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose.
>
> (Fowler, 1995, p. 4)

Defined this way faith becomes relational. Faith " emphasizes a foundation of love and respect for ourselves. It is a faith that uncovers our connection to others" (Saltzberg, 2002). Where do the average high school students go to explore these issues of faith? They may have little exposure to direct experience of the spirit in their lives. They may be offered few meaningful rites of passage, and rare experiences of dialogue

around spiritual issues that truly matter to them. Many teenagers I have spoken with have, or long for, a deep spiritual understanding, but they often reject the traditional religious format. Yet they want to believe in something and they need guidance in formulating that belief.

Spirituality and faith are often deeply personal and individual constructs. How can those who are not religious leaders presume to speak of it? It is not always easy or clear. Yet, there must be ways to build support for spirituality with respect to differences. I believe one way to interact with young people about these issues is in Positive Youth Development Programs that address the issue of meaning making as part of their agenda.

Five Facets of Meaning Making

1. Purpose

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. The purpose of life is to matter, to be productive, to have it make some difference that you lived at all."
Leo Rosten (www.quotationspage.com , 2002)

What is the point of developing beliefs about meaning if they are not put into action? When meaning is anchored in action, with goals and direction, we have purpose. It can sometimes happen the other way: a purpose or cause can lead one into meaning making. Purpose is meaning making in action. Purpose often involves goals whose direct intentions are meaning making. Purpose is bringing one's meaning into the world. The poet Rumi said "Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground" (Tagore, 1997). It is crucial that young people somewhere between the ages of 17 and 24 see some of the ways that they are called to kneel and kiss the ground. These are the years when there is a readiness, a receptivity to purpose. Young people are often influenced for life by an event or a person who inspires them during

these years (Youniss, 1997, Daloz, 1996). A life without purpose is an empty life. "The feeling of emptiness generally comes from people's feeling that they are powerless to do anything effective about their lives or the world they live in (May, 1953, p, 22). Looking for a purpose is a way to empower young people to do something.

Purpose often intersects with social responsibility and citizenship. Most great causes begin with meaning and purpose. Berman (1997) posits that if we can get young people involved in a cause, a purpose, the risks they face are reduced, their learning potential is increased, and they are, most likely to stay involved in some form, for their entire life

> We can act if we believe we can act. We can build new good things. The cure for cynism, depression and narcissism is social action. Action solves two problems. It makes communities better and it gives people a sense of meaning and purpose.
>
> (Pipher, 1994, p. 251)

The Youth Leaders introduced in the case studies came to Side By Side with a purpose. They spoke of these purposes in their stated intentions: to work with the children, to interact with different types of people, to improve themselves. They found meaning in the pursuit of these intentions and some of them developed a larger, clearer purpose out of the experience of Side By Side.

2. Creativity

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us" Ralph Waldo Emerson (Perry,1926, p. 211).

Creativity is part of life, both one's inner and outer life. It is being alive. Creativity is found in works of art, in ideas, and in action. It is the love of something: a person, a word, an image, an idea, a landscape, and the ability to respond to that love (Estes, 1992). Creativity implies action; to create is to bring into being. Meaning can only

be individually created; it does not spring into life, like Athena from Zeus' forehead, fully formed. Creativity requires work, struggle, experimentation, and energy. "Creativity is the natural order of life. Life is energy, pure creative energy. There is an underlying, in-dwelling creative force infusing all of life" (Cameron, 1992, p 3). It can take many forms, from the painting of a picture, to the development of new software, to raising a family, to mentoring a student. For the purpose of this study, we will speak about creativity in the arts.

Creativity is a process; a way of looking at and doing things that can give us a fresh perspective on how to construct our lives. Philosopher Marcuse said, "If art cannot change the world, it can help to change the consciousness and drives of the men and women who change the world." Marcuse said art can give us a vision of what does not, but could, exist (Booth, 1997, p.21).

Researchers found that learners can attain higher levels of achievement by participating in the arts and that participation levels the playing field for children from disadvantaged circumstances. They also found that the arts connect students to themselves and each other, and encourage self-directed learning. The research offered evidence that the arts may provide a place for comprehensive learning experiences in social and personal growth and development, and in the development of complex thinking skills (Fiske, 1999). I see the arts as agents of change. "Painting literature, theater, film; all can open doors and move persons to transform." (Goldberg & Phillips, 1992, p. 15).

It is the approach to the arts as tools of transformation that is embraced by Side By Side. Taught by dedicated artists, the artistic activities help the Youth Leaders to grow

as they build a diverse community of care and understanding. These artistic activities are often used as a starting point for a dialogue about personal appearances or differences, and become a way to deepen connections between the participants. Educator Shirley Brice Heath believes that participation in arts-based organizations gives young people practice in creative expression, collaboration, teamwork, problem solving, goal setting, and follow through. These are all practices that will serve them well in the school and work world (Fiske, 1999). In the arts-based curriculum used in Side By Side participants began to experience some of these results.

Many of the Youth Leaders speak of the journals and the art as a place where they found increased understanding and satisfaction. Sharing their work in progress with each other spurs them on to greater effort and new approaches. They begin to collaborate, use teamwork, and become a true community. Journal pages grow in beauty and depth. There is also music, and drama, and dance. Some participants express a satisfaction in completing the musical drama with the campers; others become involved in encouraging the campers to use their journals.

3. Making a Difference

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito"

Bette Reese, (www.quotationspage.com , 2002).

Becoming involved in community service is not the only way one can make a difference, but it may be one of the most accessible and achievable ways available to young people. Service can be a great provider of hope and empowerment. Today many young people believe that they cannot possibly make a difference; they are too small and the problems are too big. In community service they are often able to witness direct and

immediate results. This can be a deeply satisfying experience. In the words of Julia Butterfly Hill, an environmental activist who climbed an ancient redwood tree as a teenager and did not climb down until she was an adult three years later: "We will win some and, and we will lose some, but what else would we want to do with our lives but offer them in service to the world?" (Whidbey Institute Newsletter, 2002, p. 2).

In performing community service Youth Leaders can make a difference in their own life and in the life of others. Service can become a direct way to find purpose and make meaning. Numerous studies indicate how important it is for young people to find ways to give back, connect to a community of others, and witness the importance of their actions (Dryfoos, 1998; Youniss, 1997; Coles, 1995). Significant, and much needed community service is one way this can happen. When Maslow (1968) talks about self-actualizing as the highest level of human development, he explains that self-actualized people are all involved in a cause that is outside of them.

I am convinced that the impact of Side By Side on the Youth Leaders would be considerably less, despite all the mentoring, all the artistic activities, and all the community building, if the Youth Leaders were not involved in something they see as important work: running a dynamic summer camp for children in need. At the end of the camp week when the children leave amid hugs and tears and wishes to stay longer, the struggles and discomforts of the week are minimized and the Youth Leaders are left with the warm glow of satisfaction for a job well done.

4. Resilience and leadership

"We must become the change we want to see." Mahatma Gandhi (Jack, 1956, p.109)

Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome, and be strengthened by challenge and even adversity (Gothberg, 1995; Werner, 1982). It is determined by a strong sense of self, a healthy capacity for intimacy, and a feeling that life is meaningful (Garbarino, 1999). All people have an innate capacity for resilience, by which they can develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, and autonomy. Resilience can be evidenced in having a sense of purpose and a belief in a bright future, including goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness. These "protective factors" or "protective processes" can be grouped into three major categories: caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation (Grotberg, 1995). These three categories are addressed in the Side By Side Program and in most successful Positive Youth Development Programs.

Studies have shown that a positive perception of self and a strong sense of control can guard against stressful situations, by giving the individual the capacities to cope with these aspects of daily life. Self-esteem is a prominent protective resource that youth can use against daily negative life events. The results of these studies suggest that problem solving, coping strategies, and self-esteem are instrumental in helping adolescents to avoid too much stress and even depression (Dumont & Provost, 1999). These capacities are developed in meaning making activities of Youth Programs such as Side by Side.

It is essential for young people to experience demonstrations of their ability to have an impact on their world. We can call this leadership, agency, empowerment, or simply resilience. This form of resilience is an important component of well being.

Leadership can be defined as actively engaging with others to accomplish change. I believe that true leadership should seek to advance the welfare and quality of life for all and act with a commitment to the common good. Leadership is a social responsibility. It is deeply connected to others and to the environment (Komives, 1998), and is an indication of resilience. I believe that leadership cannot be achieved without engaging in real, necessary, and challenging work. One of the words that repeatedly came up in the follow-up interviews and even more in later conversations with the Youth Leaders is the word, confidence. Many participants speak of their increased confidence after Side By Side. This is, I believe, an indication of their resilience that the Youth Leaders will continue to draw on throughout their lives.

5. Reflection

"Allow regular time for reflection. Turn inward and digest what has happened. Let the senses rest and grow still. … When group members have time to reflect, they can see more clearly what is essential in themselves and others." Lao Tzu (Chen, 1989, p. 37)

Reflection is essential to the promotion of learning that becomes one's own. It allows time for an experience to touch participants at a deeper level. The reflective process can deepen insights and broaden understanding (Langor, 1986; Elbow, 1973). Reflection can be practiced as a solitary activity or when a group intentionally examines their process, by examining both successes and failures. Reflection can keep a group process-oriented so that it begins to function as a successful system. Reflection is a tool for bringing insight into the actions of life.

Mezirow explains that the process of learning through self-reflection results in a "reformulation of a meaning perspective" that brings a more inclusive and more integrative understanding. He explains that in order to have a society where creativity,

diversity, and renewal of social structures are the norm, all must practice hearing how others understand and make sense of their world (Mezirow, 1990). I would add that it is crucial in this time to understand how others of different cultures and backgrounds make sense of their world. My case study data indicates that some of this more inclusive and integrative understanding is beginning to emerge for many of the Youth Leaders as they participate and then reflected on the day. The journals, besides being repositories of creative work, are a place for ongoing reflection. The group dialogues and self-evaluations with peers and mentors are activities of structured reflection and self-evaluation. Reflection was consciously built into the daily schedule of Side By Side.

Four Elements of Meaning Making

In order for the five facets of meaning making to exist they need an atmosphere that is, I believe, best created when four important elements are present. The elements that surround the five components of meaning making, interacting and affecting them, are a sense of safety, a connection to a community, having mentors, and feeling a sense of challenge.

1. Safety

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Martin Luther King (King, 1987, p. 56)

The need for safe places where we can practice new ways of being and knowing without fear of injury, embarrassment or scorn is essential. Safety can be created in spaces, activities, and in ways of interacting. In order for safety to be ensured there should be no tolerance for violence of any kind: physical or verbal, judgments or censure.

New ways of resolving conflict and expressing differences with respect must be found and practiced. Listening skills and speaking from the heart can be practiced. A safe place in some youth programs comes from an understanding that this is a place for understanding, experimentation, and growth. It often becomes a place where participants can learn how to do group process and try new behaviors while maintaining their own personal integrity. It is a place where cooperative problem solving is practiced. Sergiovanni (1994) imagines a safe place where respectful community can grow. He wants to see an increased civility and deep listening where we can understand others and build sensitivity to different views and backgrounds. At Side By Side, the safe place is developed through sharing and positive modeling among other ways. Along with honesty and confrontation, the group practices kindness and understanding. The time of biography sharing is frequently mentioned as a profound, but safe place where compassion and understanding grew as people told their stories.

2. Community: Identity, Connections, Relationships

"The truth we are seeking, the truth that seeks us, lies ultimately in the community of being where we not only know, but are known" (Palmer, 1983, p. 90).

Sociologist Robert Bellah defines community as " a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it (Bellah, 1985). We have repeatedly seen in our case study data how important community is for young people. A meaningful life is usually discovered in relationship with others. Most people long to experience this feeling of being known. The young women in this study often experience being known through the mentoring, by telling their biographies, and by

sharing their personal reflections with the group. In being known and beginning to know others, caring relationships develop.

> Through finding and helping to develop my appropriate others, I discover and create the meaning of my life. And in caring for my appropriate others, in being in-place, I live the meaning of my life.... I realize the point of my life: what specifically requires me, what it is I am to serve.
> (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 76)

Social responsibility is the personal investment in the well being of others and the planet. Social responsibility is about caring. It's about the way we live with each other and treat each other. It's about touching other people's lives (Berman, 1997). Whether we are looking at business or youth organizations, church groups or schools, the need for successful community arises. I believe that we can create vibrant communities when we affirm our own identity, discover what dreams of possibility we share, and join with others to make meaning. "Both meaning and significance [purpose] are the driving forces behind our quest for connections with common ideas and ideals. Both meaning and significance [purpose] are at the heart of community building" (Segiovanni, 1993, p.193). The Youth Leaders all mention the importance and power of the community that developed during the summer program. This practice community provides modeling for the skills they will need in the world and for meaning making to continue in new and different communities.

3. Mentors

Mentors support our highest ambitions, encouraging us to set goals and strive to meet them, and even inspire us to do important work in the world. In describing the findings from their study of how people find and sustain a commitment to the common good, the authors of Common Fire said,

> The majority of those in our study described important mentoring relationships with individuals or communities, and we heard many stories of mentors who planted just the right seed at the right time.
> (Daloz et al, 1996).

Most mentors hope to be able to plant a seed that will continue to grow and bloom long after they are no longer there. If we look at one definition of mentors we see the growth potential in it.

> Today, a mentor is any caring, mature person who forms a one-on-one relationship with someone in need. A mentor is defined as one who listens to, cares for, gives advice to, and shares information and life/career experiences with another, especially a young person requiring assistance.
> (Dondero, 1997, p. 882)

It is also important for adults to be in relationship with the creativity and energy of the younger generation. Therefore, the work of mentoring is often revitalizing and growth-enhancing for both generations. The Youth Leaders speak about the importance of being mentored. They want and need an adult who will continue to guide them.

4. Challenge

> "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."
> Eleanor Roosevelt (www.quotationspage.com, 2002)

A central question for those who work with youth is, "How do we get them on board, how do we light their fire?" Few doubt that the embers are there, often tamped down and hidden, but a spark can be usually be found if only someone bothers to search.

Anyone who has solved a tricky math equation, run a marathon, or climbed a mountain, knows the satisfaction of a challenge well met. Learning to devote attention and follow-through to challenging tasks is needed to develop skills and competencies and

confidence. In a study of talented teenagers, researchers discovered that what characterizes talented people is that they enjoy the hardships and the challenges connected with the development of their talent. (Csikszentmihalyi, et al, 1993). In the Buddhist tradition, the true warrior is the one who has the courage to face his/her own fears and know him/herself. The warrior does not slay the dragons, but transforms their energy into positive power and gives it back to the world in this transformed state. This is a way of looking at challenge that encourages positive risk. Teenagers will face many risks as they grow up. If we can provide them with risks that are intellectually and physically challenging, risks that also might be socially significant, we can increase their safety as we light their fire (Lightfoot, 1997). These challenges become experiences out of which young people construct lives that have meaning and purpose.

When young people are given challenges and the support to meet them, they may grow beyond their own and others' expectations. Many of the experiences of the participants in this study were created or at least sharpened by the challenges they faced. Sometimes they did not even realize until later how important these challenges were for their development, but they did know that something in them changed. In retrospect they see the intensity as a positive attribute of the experience and they notice the confidence that they developed in response to meeting the challenge.

Meaning making for Youth Programs

"The best programs see a youth holistically and strive to provide youth supports to youth and their families at each point along the prevention-treatment continuum." (Burt, 1998, p 274).

Meaning making is essential for successful, dynamic positive youth development. The promotion of youth development must include a focus on strengths and competencies and attention to building skills and competencies. It is a rights-based approach from an ecological perspective (Burt, 1998). The Youth Development approach must

> Shift from thinking about treatment interventions to thinking about how to interact with youth; from concentrating on fitting people into programs to being willing to meet people's needs however that can be done; and from focusing exclusively on problems to focusing on the entire context of a youth's environment.
>
> (Burt et al, 1998, p. 34)

A prevention-treatment continuum moving from treatment-focused to prevention-oriented has been used to describe current youth programs. If we view this continuum as the horizontal I would add another dimension to this linear model. It would be a vertical continuum from didactic educational activities to creativity to meaning making so that as well as moving from treatment to prevention, a program could also be viewed as moving from basic activities to meaning making activities. This might help us to view programs more holistically. The need to demonstrate specific outcomes has restricted dynamic, experimental programs from speaking about the human perspective, the importance of inspiring leadership, and viewing the whole. These are aspects that staff and participants know usually make the difference in a successful program, but these aspects do not always fit into the outcomes report.

Based on recent program evaluations, researchers found that successful organizations "all had adults who created and nourished places of hope through their skills of community building, listening to youth, and bringing adults and youth together for concrete, productive purposes." (Roth et al, 1998, p. 442). These dedicated adults

create a place where there is individual attention, cultural acceptance, opportunities for decision-making and responsibility, and where a family-like atmosphere is created where participants can feel safe, cared for and empowered. (Roth et al, 1998). Successful youth organizations build strong civic and pro-social values in youth and allow them opportunities to re-shape their neighborhoods and in the process (Fiske, 1999). I have found that young people need safe places where they can:

1. Make meaning in their lives
2. Find opportunities to pursue a purpose
3. Develop connections and relationships to:
    - Others (of diverse backgrounds)
    - The spiritual
    - Nature
    - Meaningful work
    - New ideas
    - Caring adults
4. Practice creative expressions in the arts
5. Experience challenging activities and ideas
6. Be given a chance to be heard.

Youth programs cannot be expected to address and compensate for all the stressors of society such as poverty and racism and the profound neglect this can create in marginalized youth, but they can do more to be meaningful. A good place to start is to meet some of the above six needs in a safe, respectful, enjoyable atmosphere. Youth workers and youth participants, with some support, can begin to see their tasks as meaning-filled.

Development of Meaning Making

"We human being seem unable to survive, and certainly cannot thrive, unless we make meaning" (Parks, 1986, p. xv).

The purpose of this study was to explore ways of meaning making as a part of the healthy development of adolescent girls. For the purpose of this study I have defined meaning making as a process through which individuals, in this case young women, can be helped to explicitly experience, integrate, and reflect on their life as they make the transition from adolescents into successful, caring adults. In this process they master something of worth, develop their capacities, and broaden their view of the world. Meaning making affects how they construct conscious lives, care for others, embrace change, and broaden their purpose for living.

The primary task of late adolescence and young adulthood is to explore the meaning of self and the world, and reformulate relationships and beliefs around this personal discovery process (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 1989; Parks, 1986). It is an interdependent process of increasing cognitive ability combined with the ongoing interactions with family, community, peers, society, and world. The essence of being human is attributing meaning to events and relationships in our lives. These meanings encompass heart, mind, body, and soul and become part of our personal life stories (Gilligan, 1982). New levels of meaning making may bring powerful emotions of joy or love, but can also bring despair at seeing the challenges presented by caring. I am convinced that the development of meaning making skills is generally best done with others. Many young people believe that they cannot make meaning alone, but need to be

part of a system of belonging. They often experience two great longings: to be a distinct, independent individual and, at the same time, to be in relationship with others.

Although my approach to meaning making is developmental, a relatively new science, I wish to focus on the integrated, cultural context rather on the more limited individual psychological context. This approach is consistent with the ecological, systems approach that was described in chapter one of this study.

In examining developmental theories for insight into meaning making one generally starts with Piaget and Erikson. Piaget (1972) offered insight into how humans, starting as young children, compose their world and develop their capacities in the process. Infants cannot imagine what they do not see, toddlers begin to exhibit sequential thinking, and school aged children develop concrete operational thinking. Adolescents can develop formal operational thinking, the capacity to think hypothetically or symbolically, to think about thinking. Piaget saw this as a linear process wherein growing individuals develop increasingly complex ways to know the world. Young children cannot make meaning in the same way as adolescents and adolescents' ability is less than that of adults.

Erikson's (1968) eight stages of development each centered around a developmental task that is described in the stages name: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity. The completion of each task determines the ego strengths or weaknesses that will be formed. These stages are also linear, developing chronologically with physical maturation.

William Perry (1970) described cognitive development in nine positions beginning with authority bound, dualistic knowing where there exists a clear dichotomy

of right and wrong, us and them. This can later change into unqualified relativism where it is acknowledged that all knowledge is relative, and finally to convictional commitment. This cognitive development is linear, but is not automatic. People may stay in the lower position such as authority bound throughout their entire life.

Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development posits that moral judgments and actions have a rational core of cognition in interactions that develops as individuals grow. These begin at preconventional levels in early childhood, which Kohlberg describes as a premoral position, then move to conventional levels in adolescence, and finally in adulthood, may develop into the universal ethical principle level where there is a commitment to principles. None of these moral orientations is automatic. Each level must be constructed by the developing individual in interactions with others.

In recent years, several researchers (Miller, 1976, Chodrow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982) have pointed to the male bias that predominates in most theories of development. They describe the masculine epistemology as a system of knowledge that uses a predominantly male perspective as if it were the objective truth. This methodology uses only male subjects in research, does not test for sex differences, and incorporates the dominant values of the culture (Kaschak, 1992). Starting with Freud and continuing through Erikson, Perry, Levinson, and Kohlberg this epistemology has been the norm.

Carol Gilligan (1982) believes that there is a disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development models. She suggests that the ethic of care taking and relationship is being denigrated or omitted. From the research of Gilligan and that of the Stone Center at Wellesley College, emerged a new relational theory of self. From this perspective it is believed that relating and responding are the

central organizing dynamic of women's, and perhaps all people's, lives (Jordan, 1989). This relating and responding voice is relational and places a greater emphasis on staying connected than on finding individual identity.

In most of these developmental theories there exists a higher, altruistic level of development that is formed in the adult years. Piaget (1972) names this the formal operational stage, where one develops the ability to hold one's own and the others' perceptions simultaneously. Erikson's (1968) eight stages climb directly from infancy to the late adult years when issues of generativity and integrity are developed. Perry (1968) describes the transition from a dualistic knowing to a way of knowing one's own values while acknowledging the beliefs of others. Kohlberg (1981) describes the highest stage of moral development as Universal Ethical Principles, a commitment to universal principles of justice. Fowler (1981) presents the highest level of faith as conjunctive faith when adult vision, principles, and goals are formed in correspondence with the world. These theories all involve some community engagement and some demonstration of altruism at the higher levels. All these theories are to some degree linear and hierarchical in design.

I would suggest that the process of meaning making development involves a more holistic and inclusive approach: one that integrates the many stages into an ongoing cyclical process of development. I have found that adolescents may, at times, address the higher stages of development in their search for meaning. In fact, experiencing these higher levels of development during the adolescent years may be a necessary developmental task. This could be compared to Bruner's (1960) spiral curriculum that circles back around to itself at higher levels, building upon the previous visits. "A curriculum ought to be built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society

deems worthy of continual concern of its members" (p. 52). Kegan (1982) describes a theory of an evolving self in motion, where truth is composed not simply on an individual level but by interaction with others. Parks (1986) sees this quest for meaning as a striving towards truth and justice, which, in turn, demands a larger truth and an expanded community. Some describe this developmental level as an awareness of the common good (Daloz et al., 1996). If young people are not exposed to aspects of this larger meaning making when they are young, open to change, and sensitive to the ideal, they may not be receptive 20 or 30 years later (Youniss, 1997, Daloz et al. 1996, Gilligan et al., 1988).

Returning now to Erikson's (1968) three principles of identity: 1) identity based on agency, the individual's ability to act; 2) identity developed through social-relatedness; and 3) the process of identity involving ethical considerations and common understanding, we find the need for meaning and connections in adolescent lives. Erikson emphasizes that such ideological guidelines need to have a quality of transcendence. They must transcend family values and give young people a sense of connection to their broader social and cultural contexts. This form of identity formation is a spiral process. There is a need to expose young people to meaning making experiences to insure that the higher levels of development are attained.

> Gaining a sense of agency and feeling responsible for addressing society's problems are distinguishing elements that mark mature social identity. When identity is then integrated with a clear political or moral stance, individuals are able to transcend the moment and draw meaning from society's history, which, in turn, makes it possible to face the future with hope and confidence.
>
> (Youniss & Yates, 1997, p. 36)

In the beginning of this study I spoke about meaning making as a process through which individuals, in this case young women, can be helped to explicitly experience, integrate, and reflect on their lives as they make the transition from adolescents into successful, caring adults. In the process of meaning making they can master a sense of worth, develop their capacities, and broaden their view of the world. Meaning making affects how they construct conscious lives, care for others, embrace change, and broaden their purpose for living. It is the way to construct knowledge of self and the world (Komives, et al, 1998) and the way we make sense of our world. Parks suggests that adulthood is, in itself a way of meaning making.

> To be an adult is (1) to be aware of one's own composing of reality (2) to participate self-consciously in an ongoing dialogue towards truth, and (3) to be able to sustain a capacity to respond – to take responsibility for seeing and reweaving (in the activity of one's every day) a fitting pattern of relationships between the disparate elements of self and world.
>
> (Parks, 1986, p. 79)

A powerful meaning making experience has the potential to change young lives and help them to become adults. As people who care about the future, we can help young people to find meaning in their lives by affirming identity and building community, by creating a climate that supports pluralistic expression and exploration, and by providing opportunities to practice crossing the boundaries that often separate us from each other and therefore from true, spiritual meaning.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions of this study focus on the issue of meaning making in young people. I began this study with the questions, how do seven young women in Side By Side view their summer experience and does this experience have an impact on their development of identity and meaning making? Each of the seven young women in this study found their way to identity and meaning making in different ways. Most of them are still in the process and will ideally keep growing for many years. The all showed a willingness to be challenged and to grow.

This study of the experience of seven girls in an intensive summer leadership program has provided a vehicle for me to examine my assumption and beliefs about meaning making. These assumptions have developed during my years of teaching experiences, psychotherapy work, and developing youth programs. These beliefs and assumptions have been informed through my interactions with students and colleagues and by the theories of adolescence development, systems thinking, positive psychology, and reflective practice. The beliefs have also come out of a personal spiritual source and the spiritual practices that have guided me. Working with adolescents over the past years I have become convinced that academic progress, extracurricular activities, drug use, home life, and learning style are often secondary to their need to make meaning out of their lives. Although this need for meaning

making is crucial there is often very little in the lives of adolescent's today that directly addresses it.

The strength of my study was the versatility and diversity of the data. The training material of Side By Side, designed for an intensive summer experience and community building served as the instruments of data collection. The research component added a depth and significance to the work the youth leaders were engaged in. They knew that their experience mattered, that it was being recorded, and this added a significance and sense of importance.

I had a rich array of data on which to draw. I had the journals, the interviews, the tapes of the group sessions, and the personal background from their own narrative biographies. I did not ask the participant's directly about meaning- making. I did not want to unduly influence them or make them self-conscious. I now wish that I had asked them in the beginning: "What is meaningful in your life? " and asked them in the follow-up interview: "What was meaningful about your Side By Side experience?"

There were a number of limitations of the study. There were only seven participants whom I studied and their experience at Side By Side was limited to three weeks in August. Side By Side aims for a balance of gender and race, but this particular year there were only two women of color in the program. Since I was unable to complete a follow-up interview with one of them, I felt that my data was somewhat compromised.

In addition, my involvement and responsibility to the Side By Side program was sometimes a distraction from the research. I also wondered if my obvious stake in the success of the program exerted an undue influence on the participant's desire to please.

If I did this study again, I might have an independent interviewer in order to avoid the obvious bias, though my relationship with the young women gave me certain advantages. I had a caring relationship with the Youth Leaders that encouraged disclosure. I would also like to interview the staff and the Youth leaders' parents at the conclusion of the program.

Implications

The implications are threefold: those that apply to my personal work; those that apply to the specific program of Side By Side; and those that apply to the field of Youth Development.

1. I see, for myself, the need to continually test and challenge my own biases and assumptions on race, socio-economic class, culture, and gender. I have struggled to make the holistic approach of positive youth development understandable to others.
2. Side By Side needs to simplify how it describes the program to the world and increase the self-assessments. The staff must be diverse itself and prepared to deal with the issues around racism that arise.
3. There are identifiable, reproducible components of meaning making. They are described in Chapter eight. There is not a one-size-fits-all formula, but these are general components that are effective. This study has clarified my understanding of what is needed to make youth programs succeed. These components can be identified and taught.

Given the consensus in government, education and communities of the need for meaningful out-of-school programming for adolescents, it becomes more important than ever to understand what kind of approach is needed. The findings of this study can and should have an impact on out of school programming and serve to inform the development of youth programs. There are also implications implicit in this study for the training and development of youth workers.

A powerful meaning making experience has the potential and possibility to change lives. It is especially valuable during the years between 16 and 24. If attention is paid to the components needed and the search for meaning, there is a better chance of significant transformation for participants. The broad benefits of a meaning making positive youth development approach have the potential to impact many people and communities. We need to see more research on meaning making and young people.

Recommendations

I would like to end this study with the presumption of offering some recommendations. These are culled not only from this study, but also from my years as parent, teacher, therapist and program director. They are offered in s spirit of gratitude and with the hope that they may be of benefit. Cut and paste and use only what works for you. Most important of all: walk on.

To parents and other interested adults:

It is absolutely clear to me that the presence of caring, dynamic adults is essential to the healthy development of adolescents. They need parents and other adults who are not afraid of the chaotic and challenging events of normal teen development. Despite the emotional roller coaster, often directed at adults, we can stay involved, encourage and even push a little. Recognizing that these changes are necessary, we can offer positive regard, heartfelt love, and reasonable limits when safety is an issue. Adults need to listen to young people long enough so that when we talk to them they may actually listen to us. Stories are a powerful tool, and can be a way to communicate when more direct approaches are repelled. Tell your story and have them tell you theirs. Conversation with teens often takes courage, and if we are not strong enough to face some creative discomfort this kind of talk may disappear from our homes and schools. A good start would be to turn off the television and attempt a conversation at the dinner table. Watch their movie or read the reviews. Know a little bit about their TV show and their favorite music and talk about the ideas presented. Start with a real curiosity about what their experience and reaction to the world is like. Ask specific questions without having an

opinion before hearing their view. Set judgments aside for a while and let them talk. Often hearing themselves explain why they do things is the best way to challenge their practices. Save criticism and disapproval for the most outrageous or dangerous behaviors. Pick your battles. If it is war all the time, communication will die and the opportunities to monitor and influence will dry up.

We often hear that young people need clear, but reasonable boundaries and guidelines. Anyone who has tried to do this knows how difficult it is to hold fast in the face of a determined and aggressive attack that comes with all the energy and intensity of youth. Have courage and look at the big picture. Parenting is a long road and the most important goals are years in the future. Do not be afraid to set them or to change them. Routine chores, homework time, and even family time works well to bring order and communicate care. Once the routine is set and the relationship established, you can plant some challenging ideas, expand on some dreams, and propose some challenges. Stay optimistic. Always look for the strengths, the talents, and the passion of young people and point them out and celebrate them. Address the problems of sexism and racism in our society. Seek support from other adults. Laugh whenever possible.

To Youth Programs:

Research shows how interconnected and complex the problems of youth can be. Therefore efforts for prevention must look to root causes and focus more on capacity building and strengthening resilience. Many youth programs are making this shift. As they realign the focus from a single-issue problem-oriented model (such as pregnancy prevention) to holistic, ecological approaches (positive youth development), the importance of protective factors, capacities building, and resilience becomes the focus of their work with young

people. People and programs that work with youth must consider the broader parameters of their task. They must take an integrative approach where they see the whole and view the program and the participants from a systems perspective. Once they have created a safe place, attention can be turned to creating a climate of meaning making. As explained in chapter eight, programs need to address the needs of young people by having:

- A holistic, ecological systems approach: Youth are seen as resources and viewed within the context of their many worlds: peers, family, school, work, and community. There needs to be a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach when working with adolescents and young adults.
- A willingness to address the economic and social conditions that threaten young people's safety.
- A collaboration with parents.
- A sense of belonging and meaningful relationships: a greater sense of connection through diverse communities. We need to nurture and develop the sense of belonging that most youth hunger for. These are developed in many ways, but are not automatic. They must be planned and initiated and modeled. Diversity is a key. We must include cultural awareness and use practice models such as "Undoing Racism" to face these issues head on.
- A Reflective Practice: listening and dialogue. This is needed for spiritual growth and in order for community connections to succeed. In the past it may have been considered natural to learn to listen and to talk to others, but it is no longer a given. We need practice and models and ongoing

experiences in listening and dialogue. Youth programs are the ideal place for this practice.

- An Artistic practice. Artistic experiences and chances to create are needed for meaning making and are a tool that can be used for listening and dialogue and for community building. Using the arts in youth programs are a powerful way to open up minds and hearts and change behavior.
- Capacity building components: In addition to the areas already mentioned, such as artistic skills and listening skills, capacity building involves social skills training, mediation and non-violence skills, and literacy. We must involve youth in decision making and governance of our programs and in our communities. They must have incentives such as entrepreneurial initiatives and service components. The youth need opportunities to be the teacher, the leader, and the mentor to younger children.
- Inspirational ideas and people: We need places where young people can be exposed to powerful, idealistic ideas and inspiring people who are putting these ideals into practice in the world.

I believe that the most effective action we can take to help young people is to reduce poverty. I do not want to imply that without economic social change youth programs can solve all the problems in our country. Although poverty does not irrevocably predict the failure of adolescents to meet their developmental needs, socio-economic conditions do affect their options in life, limiting chances and adding considerable obstacles to the already challenging task of growing up.

There is no formula for successful youth programs, but there are some commonalities, some best practices. Forming a vision together becomes crucial. I also want to stress the importance of staff development for youth programs. Staff is often underpaid and overworked. Meaning making becomes crucial at the staff level. Team building can never be ignored.

I have to add one last component for people and programs that work with youth: eating together. A shared meal can become a sacred ritual. It can cross cultural boundaries; build understanding, spread joy, and help growing bodies concentrate and grow. Feed the young people you are with. Breaking bread together is not only a need, but also a tool for community building and meaning making; it can be a sacred act.

To young people:

I have a few insights I would like to share with young people.

- Seek out elders: One sign of resilient youth is that they find adults to guide and care about them. Do not hesitate. Look for the people in your life that can serve as mentors and stay connected to them. These can be parents or your friends' parents, teachers, coaches, youth workers, or clergy.
- Take action. Get involved. Follow through. Do not be afraid to push through and complete your initiatives.
- Try new experiences. Expand your horizons. Accept challenges. Place yourself in situations where you are with different people from your usual day. Experience ideas and people that are not your norm.
- Take risks. Don't be afraid to fail. If you never take a risk, you will be severely limited and you'll never grow. Risks get a little more comfortable with practice.

- Ask questions. Develop curiosity. Don't be afraid to be inexperienced.
- Believe. Build your own version of faith. Find something to believe in and give it all you've got.
- Breathe. There will be stress and challenge in your life. It is never to soon to practice mindfulness and relaxation.
- Practice Love: Love of another, love of the natural world. Love expands your world.
- Dare to dream: Set goals and keep dreaming. If you partner dreams with goals, they really can come true.
- Give back. You need to find ways to share who you are with the world. Practice giving back. Find the joy of service.

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